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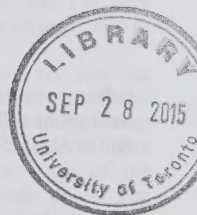
Première session, 41^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 23 September 2015

Mercredi 23 septembre 2015



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 23 September 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 23 septembre 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Orders of the day.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I would like to give the President of the Treasury Board an opportunity to do something before I do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy House leader makes a fine point, and I shall allow us some rustle time.

I acknowledge the President of the Treasury Board.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I have a message from the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, the Lieutenant Governor, signed by her own hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Rise, please.

The Lieutenant Governor transmits supplementary estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending March 31, 2016, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly. Toronto, September 22, 2015. Elizabeth Dowdeswell.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROTECTING CONDOMINIUM OWNERS ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA PROTECTION DES PROPRIÉTAIRES DE CONDOMINIUMS

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 17, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 106, An Act to amend the Condominium Act, 1998, to enact the Condominium Management Services Act, 2015 and to amend other Acts with respect to condominiums / *Projet de loi 106, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur les condominiums, édictant la Loi de 2015 sur les services de gestion de condominiums et modifiant d'autres lois en ce qui concerne les condominiums.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): When we last had this topic, the member from London West had finished her time. We are now into questions and comments.

The member from Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Chris Ballard: It gives me great pleasure to be able to respond to the comments made by the third party.

I just wanted to say that buying a condo is obviously one of the most significant purchases in a person's life. We're taking action through this proposed bill, Bill 106, not only to protect this important investment for owners but for all those who currently call a condominium home.

Mr. Speaker, I can say that one of my beliefs is that Bill 106 will also be very good for the condominium development and building industry, in that it will strengthen consumer support for those purchases.

I just wanted to touch on a few of the things we heard through our very extensive consultation. I'll say that in all my years, I haven't come across such an extensive consultation process as the one that the government undertook to listen to consumers, listen to builders etc.

Three of the things we heard were that condo owners need timely and reliable information and direct access to their condo corporation's financial records; clear and consistent rules are needed to ensure condo reserve funds are properly funded; and clearer rules are also needed to ensure that appropriate financial controls are in place when condo corporations spend their owners' money. Mr. Speaker, Bill 106, the proposed legislation, fulfills all of these requirements. I'm glad to hear that there is support, if qualified, from members opposite.

This legislation, if passed, will strengthen financial management requirements, and it will be the right thing for the condo market. I am quite delighted to support it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I am very pleased to join the discussion today on Bill 106, the Protecting Condominium Owners Act. Buying a condominium is a very important investment in a person's life, and I'm very encouraged to see that our government is taking action to protect homeowners' investments.

In my riding of Kitchener Centre, I can tell you that the condo market has experienced remarkable growth in recent years. We are seeing old, empty buildings being transformed into new condominium residences. For instance, the Kaufman Lofts was once home of the Kaufman rubber factory where they made boots. The one-time Arrow Shirt Factory is now an upscale condo complex and the old Eaton's store on our main street is now a fashionable living space in our downtown.

Just a few years ago—I can tell you that after spending three decades in the suburbs of Kitchener Centre with my husband, raising three kids, as soon as the youngest one graduated from high school—in fact it was practically the day she came back from graduating from high school—my husband was pounding a for sale sign in the front

lawn. We wanted to downsize, so we left our four-bedroom home to move into a condo, into the centre of town.

If you are to drive through downtown Kitchener today, you're going to see a couple of new, large condo developments that are under construction, such as the One Victoria building. Just a few blocks away on the main street, King Street, you're going to see the City Centre condos.

The people who are interested in locating in the downtown are aging boomers, like I mentioned, my husband and myself. They're looking at downsizing and taking advantage of the amenities that can be found in the heart of the city. You also see younger individuals and couples; oftentimes, a condo is the first home that they can afford. So condos do seem to have a very wide-ranging appeal to people. However, when you make this investment, you want to make sure that you are protecting your investment. This is why we are looking at reforming—updating—the rules that currently govern how people live in condominiums.

As you heard my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora mention, we consulted extensively for 18 months during this process; we listened to many stakeholders who told us that they want to see us fortifying our legislation. Condo owners are now going to have access to dispute resolution. They're going to have protection on legal proceedings when they are involved in that. I say that this new legislation is going to go a long way in protecting people's rights.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: With respect to this bill, I spoke last week extensively on it. I want to repeat one area of particular interest, and that is the differences that will be required in this act to pay particular attention to rural and northern Ontario. As I often do, Speaker, I remind this Legislature that when you have an area that is two thirds the size of the province of Ontario, but with a very sparse population spread out over that vast area, we really do have a lot of different requirements.

Yes, we have condominiums in northern Ontario. They are, for the most part, not anything like the condominiums in the urban centres of Ontario, especially the ones here in the GTA. When you think about how any one of the condo buildings in the GTA could house many of the communities in my riding in the one building, you really do realize that you have very distinct needs. So when I see some of the rules and regulations about websites that are going to be required, when I think of the condominiums in northern and rural Ontario, they are very different than the condominiums in the urban centres, and the rules and regulations may need to be adjusted or adapted, if you will, to some of the realities of northern Ontario.

When we have a condo, some of them are very, very small. I'm not quite certain the rules will work as well in northern Ontario, especially when I see things such as these websites and other boards and training that must be held. I look for that through the amendment area.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's a pleasure to follow my colleague from London West, who addressed this bill at greater length. As you are well aware, the NDP has been pushing hard for changes to condo law since our colleague Rosario Marchese from Trinity–Spadina introduced his first bill in March 2007. There are some useful elements in this bill—no one can deny that—but clearly our concern is the number of elements that are missing from this bill.

We believe that creation of a place where condo owners can resolve disputes quickly and cheaply is critical to the well-being of condo owners and the condo industry across Ontario. This bill will provide an opportunity, a forum, for resolving disputes between condo members, condo management and condo boards, but it excludes resolving disputes between condo owners and developers. That leaves many condo owners and buyers without adequate protection.

0910

In my riding, on Carlaw Avenue, a number of condos have been built in the last decade. In one condo, at the south end of Carlaw, the owners found that the flooring that was installed was completely contrary to what had been presented in the showroom, that they had been promised. And they, individually, had to take on the condo developer and bankroll their lawsuit with their own money in order to get any satisfaction.

That shouldn't have to happen. There should be a low-cost, government-supervised tribunal where condo owners who have been given a unit that doesn't meet any or even significant parts of the units that were displayed at the presentation should be able to go for inexpensive, fair resolution of those problems. That's a significant shortcoming in this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from London West has two minutes.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I would like to thank the member for Newmarket–Aurora, the member for Kitchener Centre, the member for Nipissing and, of course, my colleague the member for Toronto–Danforth for their comments on my remarks. Some of the issues they touched on reinforce some of the points that I made during my speech on Bill 106.

In particular, I wanted to reference the concern of the member for Toronto–Danforth about the lack of a dispute mechanism to address issues that arise between owners and developers. During my remarks, I shared the story of constituents in London West, Barry and Nicole Cotton, and their nightmare experiences. They've seen their retirement savings go out the window because of a condo deal gone bad.

The member for Nipissing talked about regional differences and the importance of the legislation not taking a one-size-fits-all approach to condo issues in this province. Certainly, I mentioned in my speech that London is unique among Canadian CMAs because 70% of our condo stock is row houses or single detached

homes. Of course, that means that the kinds of issues that arise in London may be quite different than issues that arise in other parts of the province.

In particular, when you have condos that consist of row houses or single detached homes, many of the issues concern developer or builder kinds of flaws, and there are no mechanisms currently within the legislation to address disputes that arise. There is no meaningful reform of Tarrion to ensure that condo purchasers are covered when they make this very significant investment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm going to be sharing my time with the member for Kitchener Centre and the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs as well.

I want to begin by welcoming all of my colleagues back from Finch, Ontario. We're all freshly back from the International Plowing Match, where I think we all had a fantastic time. I still feel like I've got a little bit of farm sand in my throat right now. Aside from that, it was a fantastic experience, I think, again, for all of us. Welcome back. It's always a tough morning to come in after having a great day out in the outdoors, talking to our colleagues in rural Ontario. Now here we are back in downtown Toronto at Queen's Park, ready to begin debate again. I think I'd prefer to spend another two or three days in Finch. Some of my colleagues are nodding their heads.

But we're back at work here today at Queen's Park, and I'm always happy to be here to talk about important legislation. This Bill 106, Protecting Condominium Owners Act, is an important piece of legislation. This is the first time the legislation has been amended since 1998, so it's overdue.

I think back to my days here as an assistant in the Peterson government, and I remember the debates about housing used to all be about the Tenant Protection Act—at the time it was the Landlord and Tenant Act. That was really what we talked about when we talked about buildings. There really was not a lot of discussion about protecting condo owners. There weren't a lot of political issues about condos in those days. There were probably things going on, but they really weren't rising to the surface. But now, many of us have communities that have thousands, if not tens of thousands, of condo dwellers.

I have one of them. I'm in Scarborough Centre, where the city centre of Scarborough is located. We're one of the fastest-growing city centres in North America, and most of that growth is condo dwellers. So my constituency has changed very much in the last 20 years, and I think it's very important that we keep up our legislation to ensure that the changes in lifestyle that our constituents are going through are protected by the legislation we have in place. I think that's exactly what the amendments do.

I get a sense that there is a fair amount of support around the Legislature, on all sides of the House. I don't know where the other parties are going to eventually fall

on this, but I think we all know that there is a need to provide greater protection for condo dwellers.

It doesn't mean that every condo manager is doing a poor job, by any means. I knocked on doors of all the condos in my area in the last campaign, and for the most part people are reasonably happy. In fact, there is some great quality of life developing in those condos. Many of them are relatively new, built over the last 10, 15 or 20 years, and now they're just coming to life.

I think of Lee Centre, in my area, which is an area I'm going to be losing in the redistribution going forward in the next election. Every July 1, I'm at Lee Centre with hundreds of condo dwellers who celebrate July 1 better, I think, than anybody I've ever seen. When they sing O Canada, they sing it without instruments, without music, but they sing it from their hearts. It's a very diverse community, in Lee Centre, and just a very warm group of people who welcome us in. We celebrate July 1 there every year, and it's a great celebration. It's a great example of how condo dwelling has now become more of a community-oriented exercise.

In the early days, it seemed to be more people coming in and going to work; coming and going but not really being directly involved in the community. I know that in my area condo dwellers have really evolved and changed.

I'm really happy that this legislation is here for a number of reasons. Number one, this is not legislation that was developed in the backrooms at Queen's Park. This is legislation that was developed, really, by condo dwellers themselves, and that's the key. We have a number of former ministers and current ministers who have been involved in that exercise, and even opposition members have had input into this. All of our condo dwellers across the province have had representatives who have really helped us write this legislation.

It took a lot of time. It was a very extensive consultation. It has moved forward and back as we continued to work with condo dwellers to find the right balance, and I think we have found that. That's why it's very heavily supported by all of those advocates that really represented our condo dwellers across Ontario, and it's much needed.

The licensing of managers, to me, just makes sense. It really makes sense to ensure that managers are professional; that the fly-by-nighters are pulled out of the industry. That's something that most condo managers support, because most condo managers are professional. In my experience in my area, I've come across very few who haven't been. But there have been some exceptions, and there have been times when condo dwellers have not been well served. This legislation will help protect them.

I think the consumer protections are really important, because I think we've all heard from constituents who have been purchasers of condos who have found out, when they moved in, that things like maintenance fees weren't exactly what they thought they were going to be and expenses were a little bit higher than they expected them to be. There is going to be more transparency now for those who want to purchase condos, so that they

know what they're getting into; they know what the future expenses are likely going to be. That's a protection that I think is really important.

Strengthening the dispute settlement mechanisms among condo dwellers, managers and the authorities, I think, is really important as well. It is something that was raised as a concern. That's always difficult, because you've got to strike a balance there. I think the advocates for condo dwellers would suggest we found that.

0920

It's really important that we also have accountability when it comes to financial management. I think that's where some of the challenges have occurred, in some of the less than stellar condo managers. The financial management accountability just wasn't where it needed to be.

We're now going to have much stronger financial management in the operations, in how these condos are run, that's going to help ensure that our condo dwellers are better protected and that the sustainability of these buildings is going to continue to be protected as well. That's important too, because we do find examples where buildings have not been financially well managed and the next thing you know there is a huge debt involved or a huge deficit, and condo dwellers get caught holding the bag and having to bail out the mismanagement that has taken place.

There have been horror stories. Let's face it: There have been a number of horror stories that have been documented through the newspapers and in the debates that we've had on this issue over the years and here in the Legislature. I could share them with you as well. I don't think we need to go there; I'd rather not dwell on the negative. I think we're going in the right direction now. I think we have the support of most of the condo industry, from what I gather. I think most condo managers recognize this is a step, a challenging step, but a step that needs to be taken. But most importantly, we have the support of those representing condo dwellers as we move forward.

These aren't easy steps to take. There are measures in here that are going to ensure that administration processes are set up and there's a cost to that; there's no question. But it's a cost I think that condo dwellers have determined is worth paying because it provides a level of protection that I know they believe that they need and they've asked us to do. So I think, given the consensus that's built up on this, given the work that's gone into this from all members—all sides of the House, previous ministers, current ministers and all of my colleagues here—I think that it's time to move forward with this legislation.

I very much appreciate the opportunity this morning to be able to say a few words about it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll pass it on to one of my colleagues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'm very happy to rise again this morning to add my voice to the discussion on Bill 106, the Protecting Condominium Owners Act. You heard me

mention, Mr. Speaker, that I, too, live in a condo, so when my husband and I moved into this building—you come to learn that there are very unique policies, procedures and conditions by which you are going to be living. I will say, for the most part, it's been a very good experience.

You also heard me mention that in my region we're seeing a kind of explosion with condominium growth. It is surprising to hear that half of all of the new homes that are being built in our province today are condominiums. In my region, what is helping to drive the condo boom is the creation of our new LRT; it's currently under construction. We've got shovels in the ground. We're seeing greater investment from developers in real estate—people who are looking at locating along this transportation line. I will say that my government is very proud to be investing \$300 million into this transportation line.

This is all working in tandem with the progress that we are also seeing in my region with the technology sector. We've got Google moving into the Breithaupt Block building. This was also an abandoned factory. There are other technology companies taking root there. They're hiring staff and they're looking for housing, so this is creating more housing options.

With half of all of the homes now being built in Ontario as condominiums, we're looking at, currently, 700,000 condo units in our province, and there are 51,000 more under construction. So these condos currently represent about half of all the new homes in this province, as I said, in a housing sector that's worth almost \$45 billion, and we see over 300,000 people who are being employed in the sector.

I want to ensure that the investments that people are making in my riding are protected. Looking at this legislation that we are proposing, if it's passed—it hasn't been updated in 16 years. We see the condominium landscape in Ontario changing dramatically. As you heard some of my colleagues say, we've consulted very extensively for a year and a half. We asked numerous people, stakeholders in the sector, what they wanted to see in this legislation. Here is what they were telling us: They want to see us increase protection for condo owners and Ontarians purchasing condominiums. They want us to require condominium managers to be licensed.

In my building, there are only 10 units, so it's a small building. For, I'm going to say, 30-plus years, they managed it on an ad hoc basis; two or three people in the building had the responsibilities of managing it, but it was too much work, it was complicated, and sometimes legal issues came up. Quite recently, we hired a licensed manager to take over, and things are running very smoothly. So there are advantages to this.

This legislation is also going to create new governance requirements for condo boards and strengthen the financial sustainability of condo dispute resolution. If your neighbour has a noisy parakeet, should you have to argue for six months to a year, go through a court system and perhaps pay \$50,000 to resolve this? That's taking too much time and money.

The ministry, on average, is getting about 1,000 complaints and inquiries every year on condo issues—everything from “My fees went up and I wasn’t aware this was going to happen,” to “Major financial decisions are being made without my consent,” “They’re putting on a new roof, nobody told me, and why do I have to pay all of this money?” Courts are being required to appoint an administrator to look after buildings in a financial crisis. How many buildings suddenly have an elevator that is broken down or something else that has happened, and they don’t have enough of a reserve fund? If passed, the Protecting Condominium Owners Act will help owners save not only their hard-earned money but their time. This is time that could be spent on legal proceedings, but we want to avoid that.

All condo owners are now going to have access to a dispute resolution process. We are going to see a condominium authority created, and it’s going to have oversight over the sector and provide quicker, lower-cost resolutions than what is available today. Not only will this proposed legislation, if it is passed, benefit condo owners, but it will benefit the corporations, too, by creating equal access to dispute resolution from the condo authority for only about \$1 a month per unit. That is really a very small investment, Mr. Speaker, for better protection for people who do live in condominiums in Ontario. This condo authority will be independent, self-funded, not for profit, and it’s going to remove all the complex condo disputes from Ontario’s already overburdened court system. Again, it’s going to save people time and money.

Reforming our condominium laws was a commitment in our 2015 budget, and it’s going to empower condo owners to be more confident at all stages of condo ownership. I’m a proud and happy condo owner; however, I’ll tell you, with three adult kids, when they do come home, my one complaint is that I wish I had more room for them, but my husband tells me that’s the key to making sure they go off to be self-reliant and self-sufficient. However, we still argue about that.

I believe that Bill 106 is going to go a long way to protecting homeowner rights.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. David Zimmer: It’s my pleasure to speak to the Protecting Condominium Owners Act.

I represent the riding of Willowdale. According to the Canadian Condominium Institute, Willowdale as a political riding has the most condominiums of any political riding in Canada—thousands and thousands. I have been hearing about these condominium issues and problems now for years and years. Every Friday, on my constituency day, I have two or three condo issues to deal with.

How did we decide to tackle this? The first thing was to find out what was really on people’s minds. We conducted a review in which we received over 2,200 submissions from various people who had an interest in the condo sector. As a result of that, there were five issues that came up, and we have decided to address those in the legislation. I’ll just go through each of the issues briefly.

First, there was a crying need for a new and more effective dispute resolution mechanism. So the act provides a very modern, very quick and very cost-efficient dispute resolution mechanism to keep these issues out of the expensive courts, as some of the members have mentioned.

The second issue that the review raised—and it came out in spades—was the need for consumer protection for owners and buyers. What the act does here, and the detail is in the act, is set out a series of extra safeguards to protect condominium owners and buyers and to help them make informed decisions. In furtherance of that, what it does is require the developers to give the condominium buyers a copy of—and here’s the key—an easy-to-read guide to what their condominium documents mean. Right now, it’s all in fine, fine, fine print and you need a philosopher and/or lawyer and accountant to help you understand it—so clear information.

0930

Secondly, to provide clearer and more comprehensive rules about how unexpected costs are going to be dealt with in the condominium ownership—that’s one of the big things we hear about. People are in it and suddenly they’re surprised by a big cost item which they didn’t see coming—so clearer information about why those kinds of things crop up and, if they do, how they should be dealt with.

The next thing is, it provides the government the ability to create regulations for standard—and here again is the key—condominium disclosure statements so that for people moving from one condo to another condo, there’s a common set of rules and everybody knows what the ground rules are.

The next important thing is some amendments to the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act so that the warranty protections that are available to buyers of new condominiums also apply to the buyers of condominium conversions. It might be an old school that is converted to a condo, and right now, the rules are murky. We want to standardize and make a common set of rules for those kinds of purchases.

In addition to that, there are three other items that are covered by the act that I just want to touch on. One is the whole issue of financial management of condominiums. For example, it would forbid condominium corporations from finalizing contracts unless they have fulfilled certain procurement process requirements. One of the issues we always hear about is, “We needed a repair and somebody on the condo board went out and his brother got the project.” So we’ve made some very clear procurement process rules so that there’s fairness and transparency to that issue.

Another one is how condominiums are actually run. We want a process that makes it easier for condominium owners and boards to participate and vote at the meetings. For example, now, it’s kind of a hodgepodge of rules about when and how condominium board meetings are called, so we’ve regularized that.

Fifth, and really important, there’s a condominium manager licensing program in place. Right now, I could

go out—after I retire from politics—and I could decide that I'm going to be a condominium manager and just hold myself out without any background or training. We've changed those rules and there's going to be a licensing requirement that I, David Zimmer, with all of my experience of dealing with condominiums, will still have to go through a training process, write some tests and learn some key and core competencies on how to run a condominium. That's going to eliminate a lot of the difficulties and wrangling.

What we want to do is clear up some of the confusion, bring transparency and make condominium living easier.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: The previous three speakers spoke a lot about very specific examples about condominiums and how Bill 106 will hopefully improve that.

I would actually like to reference a couple of other aspects of the bill. One is a change that will basically incorporate condominium changes under the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act. I think there are some real opportunities there to look much further into that Ontario new home warranty plan and see if there are other areas that need to be updated or improved for consumers, homeowners and individuals who are in that process.

The other is actually part VI: "The act contains general provisions dealing with such matters as the preservation of secrecy, service of documents and the setting of fees by the minister. The minister may make regulations establishing a code of ethics, governing the jurisdiction of committees and in areas prescribed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council."

Speaker, you know I've spoken on a number of occasions about my concern with how many of the details of legislation are left to regulation. I don't think there is any government—and I won't editorialize—that needs to hide into regulation the ethics that need to happen with condominium ownership and the boards therein.

So if we could have a little more clarity on what those regulations are going to look like, I think that would be helpful for both the individuals who are looking at some real improvements coming forward on this bill, as well as, quite frankly, the members of the opposition, who would like to see it laid out very specifically. What do you mean by "code of ethics," and what does that entail?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It is good to be back today from the International Plowing Match that we were there for yesterday. It was a great event.

It's good to be back debating Bill 106. We left off speaking about it last week. Speaker, it has been a long time coming, that this bill has arrived here in the Legislature, so it's good to see that the government has finally decided to bring it forward and try to make legislation that will actually help condo owners.

In some ways, this bill does do some good things—we have all agreed on that—but there are situations or

examples in this bill where things aren't as good as they could be, and we've pointed out a couple of those things.

The member from Kitchener–Waterloo talked about condo complaints. That's one of the drivers that have evolved into this bill coming forward. The complaints just don't stop at the parakeet that she mentioned that was being chatty. The complaints go further than that, and they go further into—we've talked about developers and that condo owners have complaints against developers, and, obviously, sometimes condo owners have complaints against condo managers. Those are two areas of this bill that aren't covered. Even though in this bill, there are some good steps forward that are happening in this legislation, there are those two elements that are very important to condo owners that are missing.

The member from Caledon talked about regulation. I noticed as well that there's a lot left up to regulation. It would be interesting to see what they define. Some of those areas, like the code of ethics that the member from Caledon talked about, and what kind of authority they're going to give to the condominium authority under regulation—that's also a wait-to-see kind of example in this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister for Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you, Speaker, for allowing me to speak for two minutes.

Not that long ago, Markham–Unionville was kind of like an open field, but things have changed. When you go to my riding, Markham–Unionville, you can see those condos. They are rising from the ground. For example, at the corner of Highway 7 and Warden Avenue, it's just building and building and building, and obviously, people will be moving into those condos.

On a personal note, I used to own a condo in downtown Toronto around the Bloor and Yonge area. Now I no longer own that condo. One of the reasons for that is I sold it because I didn't know, really, how much those management fees—I don't even know how much I paid—and how those management fees were being used. What I knew was they were quite expensive and they kept rising and rose to a point that one day I decided I would no longer like to own this condo.

I think Bill 106 is a good thing to do because it would strengthen the ownership of the condo. It would require the condo to have to hire managers to manage it. Also, it would create new governance requirements for condo boards, so that whoever buys a condo and moves in there would be properly protected in terms of their fees and in terms of their living there.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Todd Smith: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to bring some comments in regard to comments made by the minister of economic development, trade and employment. We also had the member from Kitchener Centre, and the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs spoke this morning as well.

I'm glad that everybody had a good time yesterday at the International Plowing Match in Finch. Sometimes we talk about condominiums rising into the sky here in Toronto like the sunflowers were in Finch yesterday; there were sunflowers everywhere. It was a great time. I hope everybody had a good time.

I have a heavy heart here this morning as a New York Yankees fan. Although they won the game last night, Yogi Berra passed away last night, a legend at age 90.

Sometimes it seems like it's déjà vu all over again here in the Legislature, and we're back talking about the condo act. It's been 16 years that we've been waiting—as the member from Kitchener Centre pointed out—for an update to legislation when it comes to condos in Ontario.

Every riding in the province has a different number of condominiums. Obviously, the member from Willowdale has many condos in his riding. There are not so many in my riding, but there are some condo communities, especially in Prince Edward county, where they needed to have an update to the legislation. There were a lot of concerns there where different property owners, maybe, weren't meeting the standards that they needed to meet, at least meeting the expectations of the condo owners.

I think it's about time that we have this debate in the Legislature and get the condo act to committee so that we can update it to ensure that these homeowners—and they are homeowners, although they're condos—are protected properly.

The member from Kitchener Centre was talking about downsizing her home to keep the kids from coming back home, right? But all she really has to do is stop cooking with cheese. Everybody knows that.

Thank you. I look forward to getting this bill to committee, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs has two minutes.

Hon. David Zimmer: In my earlier remarks, I outlined what the legislation was going to do. I thought everybody might be interested in some quick facts about the state of condo life in Ontario. We have 1.3 million people now living in condominiums; that's one in 10 Ontarians. More than 50% of new homes being built in Ontario are condominiums. There are currently 700,000 condo units in Ontario and 51,000 condominium units under construction as I speak and as we debate. Condos also represent about half of the new homes being built in this province, in a housing sector worth almost \$45 billion and employing over 300,000 Ontarians.

The government of Ontario received about 2,200 submissions through its consultations on the condominium act. That is a significant number of submissions and is indicative of the importance of this issue. In addition to that, we receive, on an annual basis, a couple of thousand complaints a year.

Most importantly, the existing Condominium Act was passed more than 16 years ago. Since then the condominium landscape in Ontario has changed dramatically. The expectations of condominium owners have changed. The services that condominium developers are offering con-

dominium purchasers, in an attempt to entice them to purchase a unit, have changed. The whole condo world has changed dramatically, and our legislation has to catch up with the existing condominium lifestyle and expectations. This legislation does that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been more than six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise. Minister?

Hon. Michael Coteau: Speaker, we wish to continue debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The debate will continue. Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Indeed, once again, it's an honour to stand in this House and speak on behalf of the good folks in my riding of Windsor-Tecumseh. I hope to bring forth a few issues that have yet been raised during previous discussion on Bill 106, an act to amend the condominium act and other acts with respect to condominiums.

I have to tell you, Speaker, I've read this proposed bill, all 159 pages. I've also read a number of submissions from interested parties. There are some good points in this bill, but there are also areas that aren't mentioned, and I wish to point out a few of them. I do so in the hope the minister will see his way to accepting suggestions on how this bill can be improved.

For example, in my neck of the woods, most of the high-rise apartment buildings in Windsor have been converted to condominium status. That started at the end of 2006 and the beginning of 2007. This wasn't done in order for the apartment units to actually be sold; it was a move quite simply to save money. Don't get me wrong; it was perfectly legal. In Windsor, units in a high-rise were taxed higher as apartments than if the units were labelled condominiums instead of apartments. The various corporate landlords came to the planning advisory committee, of which, as a city councillor, I was a member. A lot of our committee work during my first five or six years on council was spent on this mass conversion from apartment status to condo status. Tenants were accorded a life-long lease—they never had to buy their own unit—and the owners did have to have the buildings inspected, and any repairs or renovations identified had to be corrected and upgraded. This led to better locks, better safety and security, improved lighting, more parking and accessibility for the disabled—important things such as that.

At the end of the day, the city's housing stock was upgraded and that was a win for the tenants. At last count, I believe there were nearly 3,000 apartment units converted to the status of condominiums; 2,881 former apartments on paper are now known as condominiums. Three commercial units did the same thing as a means of saving money that would otherwise go to the tax man.

Of course, the tax man in this case is the city of Windsor on behalf of the more than 200,000 residents of

our great city. So on the one hand, a better grade of housing stock after modest upgrades and improvements were made, and on the other hand, the millions of dollars that corporate owners saved on these conversions is money that had to be picked up by the rest of us, the other taxpayers. That's because the cost of running the city didn't go down; it stayed the same.

I think I'm not the only one who has some of that plowing match grit and sand still with me today from yesterday.

So without these millions coming in from the corporate owners of the high-rise buildings, the rest of us had to make up the difference. I mention this only by way of getting to the point that in my area, the condo market has been saturated, if you will. Unlike Toronto, for example, or Willowdale and other parts that we've heard about this morning, we're not building very many condominiums these days. What we are seeing built are townhomes. The empty-nesters like Gale and myself wish to downsize and move into a townhome where we don't have to shovel snow and we don't have to mow the lawn.

Here is where a problem comes into this discussion, and I mention it as an example of how this bill could be improved. Let me point out at this juncture that these townhouses look the same as in other parts of Ontario where individual homeowners are still responsible for all of their exterior upkeep. These developments in my area are built more akin to what you find in the United States. The developers of these Windsor-area townhome subdivisions place restrictive covenants on these properties. They call for mandatory homeowners' associations, which assume responsibilities similar to condominiums.

Now, these covenants aren't registered restrictions under section 119 of the Land Titles Act. They are simply put on as a notice to subsequent property owners. These covenants call on the owners to establish a townhome association with elected officers, and to establish a reserve fund to cover certain capital items which are owned by the homeowner, not the association—for example, in my case, should the roof need repair or replacement.

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But it differs between townhome associations. The specifics of what might be repaired or replaced by the association differ depending on the individual bylaws. Most do, however, contract out the exterior maintenance, such as snow removal and grass cutting.

However, the fact that the restrictions are not recognized as true restrictive covenants under the law has the effect of complicating the enforcement of the restrictions. The restrictions—call it the agreement—are essentially between the developer and the homeowners. The townhome association is in effect, in legal terms, a stranger to the agreement and may not have the ability to enforce the restrictive covenants. The developer may have moved on; he or she may have gone out of business and may not have any interest at all in enforcing the restrictions. In fact, in my development, the developer has no obligation to enforce the restriction.

The association can't even amend the restrictions. Even if 100% of current owners vote in favour of doing so, we can't do it. That's because we are a stranger to the agreement. The developer has the only legal means to grant approval. The developer has an absolute discretion on whether to enforce or to amend, which can be exercised, if he wants, unreasonably. Even if the association went to court—and, as you know, that can quickly become very costly and time-consuming.

These are some things which the amendments to the Condominium Act have sought to address—a more streamlined and cost-effective enforcement mechanism. This is being denied to the growing number of townhome associations.

They have taken great care to address the situation in the American experience upon which these developers and developments are modeled. However, we have yet to see common legislative provisions here to cause a legal and level playing field between condominium associations and those established for the owners of townhomes.

There is a provision for the homeowners to pay an assessment, but there is no way to enforce delinquent accounts. The association has to sue in court for the lien. Speaker, these are monthly assessments, which means, of course, you have to launch legal proceedings on a monthly basis. Go figure.

The townhome associations are looking to the minister to grant them the power and authority to address the delinquents and enforce the covenants. They want the ability to amend these restrictive covenants if they have a majority vote to do so. They do not want to go as far as everything proposed in this new legislation, but they would like the minister to put something in here to make their associations more workable.

I know in one small subdivision, there was a problem with the shingles on a roof or two with a string of new townhomes. A couple of the units had problems. They had to be replaced, these shingles. So the question comes up, who's going to pay? Whose responsibility is it to pay for the replacement of the shingles? Might it be the manufacturer of the shingles, the company which installed them, the developer who subcontracted the shingling job, the homeowner or the townhome association?

Fingers are being pointed in every direction. Outside consultants have been called in. It has created quite a stir. That's because there is no clear written agreement to cover circumstances such as this in this one particular phase of a new subdivision.

That's not to say similar situations are covered in other phases of these types of new housing projects. That, Speaker, is just one example of how this bill could be improved.

I doubt the townhome associations need the training provision provided in this bill unless they have association managers. Few, if any of them, do in my area.

The townhome owners in my area are also calling for the overhaul of the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act. They want the minister to listen to the cries from

across the province for an overhaul of the way Tarion is set up and run. They want more representation from homeowners and less representation from home builders and developers. You and I both have heard, Speaker, member after member stand in this House and call for the same thing. I say it's time the Premier and her cabinet showed the people of this province that they have heard the calls for reform and established a process to investigate the legitimacy of these complaints.

Bill 106 is called the Protecting Condominium Owners Act. In order to live up to its name, care should be taken in setting up the tribunal which will oversee the complaint process, to ensure the actual owners of condominiums are protected. In other words, care must be taken when naming the people who will sit on this tribunal. No one can protect the owners more than the owners. If the act was called the protecting the developers of condominiums act, then I would expect we would see developers monopolizing the seats on the board—or the consultants they hire to advise them. But since the Liberals, in their wisdom, called this the Protecting Condominium Owners Act, let's insist that a majority of the members of the condominium authority are actual owners who live in their units, as opposed to corporations which bought them as an investment to rent them out.

This bill doesn't go nearly far enough to protect the people who buy condos with shoddy construction. It doesn't do much to protect consumers from the bait-and-switch campaigns of unethical developers who promise one thing and deliver a cheaper, less aesthetically pleasing finish either; for example, to the exterior of the building or the amenities, such as the lobby or recreational areas. Shoddy workmanship, cheaper products: Owners need real protection, and it's not in here.

What do we have now in Toronto alone: about seven class action lawsuits because of this? Why hasn't the government seen the light? Why won't the government take the lead? Why aren't there better protections in this bill to protect the owners? After all, they call it the Protecting Condominium Owners Act.

Speaker, our dear friend the former member for Trinity-Spadina, Mr. Marchese, is somewhat of an expert on condominium law. When the Liberals were preparing this bill and utilized the so-called expert panel for their review, Mr. Marchese pointed out that this panel for the review of the act to protect condo owners was dominated by lawyers and consultants with close ties to two condo industry lobby groups: the Canadian Condominium Institute, the CCI, and the Association of Condominium Managers of Ontario, the ACMO. Other people on the review panel, the so-called experts, included a former chief executive officer of Tarion—which, as you know, is controlled by the Ontario Home Builders' Association—and the first vice-president of BILD, the lobby group for the development industry. We have heard repeatedly that in Ontario, more than one million people live in condominiums, yet out of those million people, only one was chosen to sit on the panel shaping this new act. That was Anne-Marie Ambert. Dr. Ambert is a re-

tired professor of sociology from York University. She did an excellent job. But without better consumer protection, who's kidding who with this new act? Who is this act actually protecting?

So how can it be improved so it will live up to its name? The easiest solution, of course, is to name owners to the bodies which will oversee this act—actual individual owners, not someone who is just there to protect the developers and the bankers and the friends of the government. Let me say this again: The one owner who sat as an expert on the review panel, Dr. Ambert, did a great job. But we strongly oppose any proposal that would see the Canadian Condominium Institute or the Association of Condominium Managers of Ontario operating the new condo oversight office or offices. Let's face it: While these groups do a good job at what they do for their industry, their interests conflict. They are not always going to be the same as the interests of condo owners.

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We only have to look as far as Tarion to see how that doesn't work. Tarion, again Speaker, an organization you're very familiar with, administers the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act. We go to Tarion with complaints against the people who build our new homes. But as you know, Tarion is run by the same development industry it's charged with regulating—the fox in the hen house, so to speak. Eight of the 15 seats on Tarion's board must be held by members of the OHBA, the Ontario Home Builders' Association.

The government has given one lobby group monopoly control over all builders and homebuyers in Ontario. No wonder there are hundreds and hundreds of consumer complaints against Tarion. I'm told by people who have contacted me that there is an inherent indifference to their complaints. There are no quick resolutions, be it for faulty HVAC systems, leaky roofs, sloppy work, leaks in the basement. Whatever it is, the perception is that Tarion sides with the home builders more so than the homebuyers. Speaker, as you know, more than most of us, in politics perception quickly becomes reality. Why else do auditors, consumer advocates, even the Ombudsman say that Tarion is not accountable to the consumer? That could be corrected in this bill, but so far, it has not been. I hope the minister and his staff are listening, and I hope they seize the opportunity to correct an injustice.

My friend Mr. Marchese, the former member for Trinity-Spadina, a real advocate for condo owners and homeowners of all kinds, used to speak and write on this on a regular basis. He stood up for his constituents. He reminded us that 11 years ago, a former consumer minister and now the mayor of Ottawa, Jim Watson, not only acknowledged the problem but pledged to reform Tarion. He said he would turn it into an actual consumer protection agency. Well, we're still waiting.

Seven years ago, Ontario's Ombudsman “warned the government to stop pretending that it had meaningful oversight over Tarion....” Board members are prevented from communicating with the minister. The minister is

not entitled to the minutes of board meetings. The minister can't gain access to the internal auditor's reports at Tarion. The minister can't even get an answer on the salaries, benefits and expenses of the Tarion executives or scrutinize what they pay their consultants. Inquiring minds want to know: Is this what we're going to see duplicated and replicated by these new condo oversight bodies?

Mr. Marchese raises another interesting point: It would be unacceptable for condo owners to subsidize the training and education of building managers. Condo owners should know exactly what their mandatory levies are paying for. Let the development industry and the managers pay for their own training.

Sometimes in a conflict situation, the board of a condo takes legal action against one of its own members, another owner. There's a double-edged sword on that one as well: The owner is paying fees to the association and the association is using his or her money to hire a lawyer to fight against the owner. So his or her fees are being used against him or her in a fight with the association, and that shouldn't be. If the board is using the money that the tenants put into the association in a legal fight, they should also be paying for the owner of the condo, who is a member of the association and who has a conflict with the board—if the board is going to use the money to hire a lawyer, they should also be paying the legal fees of the owner, whose money they're using to fight against him or her.

Thank you for your time this morning.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Chris Ballard: It's my pleasure to speak for a couple more minutes and respond to some of the comments from the members opposite.

As I said earlier, I'm in support of Bill 106. Anything that makes consumers feel more comfortable entering the condominium market, in my mind, is a good thing. I know in my riding of Newmarket-Aurora, most of our growth in the years coming will be in mid- to low-rise condominium development. The Aurora planning department told me there are 10 condominium projects that are either in the application phase or moving down the pipeline to that phase. I think it's a fantastic way to address urban sprawl by intensifying our downtown core, but consumers have to feel comfortable that when they move into the condominium market they're protected.

I'm somewhat familiar with the consumer background, consumer input into this bill, from a previous life working in consumer advocacy. For example, I know there were 2,200 comments made, many of them by condominium owners, many of them by members who sit on condominium boards, and those were considered by government. I know there are about 1,000 complaints and inquiries a year on condo issues.

I also know that when the party opposite, the third party, was in power, it gutted its support for the consumer movement in this province of ours, especially the Consumers' Association of Canada. I find it really quite

rich now that members opposite can stand up and bemoan the fact that we're not doing enough for consumers. When, in fact, that party had the opportunity, it turned its back on consumers. I'm glad to see that we're moving ahead with this important piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, I just want to make a few comments about one aspect of this bill that I think has been neglected in the debate, and that is that we're creating another delegated administrative authority under this act. I'm sure most people in this House understand that these subordinate bodies have very little reporting mechanisms back to the House as DAAs. Tarion is a good example. There have been many cases of Tarion being in the news with troubles.

This bill creates a new licensing and adjudicative body that has no reporting requirements and no oversight by this House. So there we have a multiplicity of roles, a licensing and an education component, as well as an adjudicative role. The decisions by that adjudicative body are not subject to any judicial reviews. It is subject to oversight by the Auditor General; however, no other independent officer of the House has oversight of this new delegated authority.

I would like the government to consider some suggestions here along the lines of what the UK Parliament has done, and the same with New Zealand, on their subordinate bodies of the Legislature. They've made it so that people fall under the public services act in the UK and New Zealand, and the independent officers of the House do have oversight of those subordinate bodies.

We've heard that it's going to be low-cost, cheap justice, but look at the Landlord and Tenant Board. Look at the Assessment Review Board. Look at the other 37 tribunals that we have, and we don't get low-cost, cheap, timely justice.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's a real pleasure for me to stand and congratulate my colleague the member for Windsor-Tecumseh on his very well-researched and informative remarks. He provided a lot of detail about some of the very real gaps in this legislation that is before us today. As he said, certainly the New Democrat Party caucus on this side of the House supports what is in the legislation—mostly. We are very concerned about what is missing in the legislation.

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There are a couple of points that were made by my colleague that really deserve to be highlighted. First is the need for a real dispute resolution mechanism to address the issues that arise between owners and developers and condo owners and condo managers. We know and we appreciate what's in the legislation to deal with those disputes between condo boards and owners but many, many of the issues that come to our offices from our constituents deal with these other issues. The issues that arise between condo owners and the developers who built

their unit, who did, as my colleague pointed out, the bait and switch: They didn't deliver on what was promised, used shoddy materials and tried to cut corners and costs. Those kinds of issues, those very critical issues that so deeply affect our constituents, are not addressed in this legislation.

The second issue that he pointed out that I think we really need to reflect on is the importance of having as part of Bill 106 condo owners as part of this consumer protection movement to address their concerns.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Granville Anderson: I'm so honoured to speak to Bill 106, Protecting Condominium Owners Act. Thank you to the members for their comments as well.

Of course, when we think about condominiums, we think about urban centres and big cities, and for sure that's where most of them are concentrated. But when we think about development, we have to think about communities such as those in the lovely riding of Durham, such as Clarington, Scugog, which would be Port Perry, and Uxbridge. These are growing communities, and growth doesn't just mean houses and apartment buildings. You'll be glad to know that Durham has condos, mostly concentrated in Clarington, of course, but in Scugog as well. These range from downtown Port Perry to suburban Bowmanville and Courtice and along the lake in Newcastle.

Residents of these condos are very engaged in their communities and have often taken the time to tell me so. They tend to experience the condo life more acutely, as you have to drive west for some time before living in a condo community becomes a reality. I am glad that we are bringing this legislation in to provide them with more accountability to deal with their condo boards and property managers. They need reassurance that whatever down payment they make is safe and the consumer service they receive is appropriately protected.

The proposed legislation contains strong provisions to protect Ontarians at all stages of condo ownership by preventing developers from charging surprising cost increases and improving disclosures during a condo purchase.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Windsor—Tecumseh has two minutes.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you to all of my colleagues who have spoken on my 20-minute address this morning.

As we left the plowing match yesterday and were coming home—the small bus of the NDP caucus—as we were pulling into greater Toronto, I noticed, not for the first time, of course, all of the condominiums that are still being built.

I was thinking about the wonderful trip we had to the plowing match and my conversations with a few of the Liberals while we were there, including the ag minister, about how difficult it is to have the plowing match in a Liberal-held riding because most of the rural ridings in Ontario are obviously held by the Conservative caucus—

there are a few that could be held by the Liberals and, the same, a few plowing matches could be held in NDP-held ridings.

It got me thinking about the Condominium Act and what we're going to be talking about today, and how some of the bills that are brought in this Legislature by the Liberals—the perception is that they're Toronto-centric; that they're here to look after where their seats come from, as opposed to the rest of the province. You didn't see a lot of condos between Toronto and Finch and back going down the 401; it wasn't until we got back here.

It just drove home the fact, to me, that sometimes in the House you really do have to question the legislation that's being put forward, because it is Toronto-centric. When you bring forth examples of what's going on in other ridings with townhome associations—but there's nothing in this bill, nothing in this act, this proposed bill, to address the real issues that our people in my part of the province, in Windsor—Tecumseh, are facing under a different set of rules. You've got one for the condos but nothing for the townhome associations. I just want to drive that point home again.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

SPECIAL REPORT, AUDITOR GENERAL

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table a special report from the Auditor General of Ontario on community care access centres.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's my great pleasure to introduce, from Windsor, Ontario, Abe Taqtaq from the Windsor duty-free store, here today representing the duty-free stores of Ontario. Make sure all the members come out to the duty-free reception in rooms 228 and 230.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I hope the House will join me in welcoming my friends Debbie and Jim MacCrury from Cape Breton Island.

Hon. Jeff Leal: It gives me great pleasure to introduce Richard Linley, president of the Wine Council of Ontario. He is in the members' east gallery. Richard and the Ontario Craft Brewers invite you to a reception this afternoon in rooms 228 and 230.

Hon. David Oraziotti: I'd like to introduce, from Sault Ste. Marie, Ralph Caria; his partner, Dr. Michael Morsillo; and his daughter, Dr. Kristin Caria, who are here today for Ontario's duty-free luncheon. It will be taking place in rooms 228 and 230 right after question period. Everyone's invited.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I'd like to introduce, in the members' gallery this morning, my son Alex McGarry, recently returned from Timmins as a fire ranger.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I would like to welcome Fahim Ali from Scugog, parent of our wonderful page Nuh. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: On behalf of my colleague from Scarborough Centre, the Honourable Brad Duguid, it gives me great pleasure to introduce, in the House, page captain Laura Page and her mother, Sandra Page; her father, Rob; her sister Carly; her grandmother Josie Alfieri; and her grandfather Angelo Alfieri. They are in our members' gallery, and we welcome you today.

On behalf of my colleague Mike Colle, it gives me great pleasure to introduce page captain Anna Farley, whose mother, Manjusha Pawagi, is here today; and her father, Simon Farley, and her grandmother Asha Pawagi are also here in our gallery. Welcome.

Mr. Bob Delaney: It gives me great pleasure to introduce a very prominent member of our western Mississauga community, Mississauga's Citizen of the Year. Please join me in welcoming Linden King.

TRAGEDY IN RENFREW-NIPISSING-PEMBROKE

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: A point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Yesterday, there was a terrible tragedy in the Madawaska Valley, and my heart goes out to the families and friends of the three victims. I believe, Speaker, that you will find we have unanimous consent that we rise and observe a moment of silence to honour the lives of the three women killed yesterday in that area.

Thank you, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Children and Youth Services is seeking unanimous consent for a moment of silence in honour of and tribute to the three women murdered. Do we agree? Agreed.

Please all rise.

The House observed a moment's silence.

APPOINTMENT OF TEMPORARY OMBUDSMAN

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On September 17, 2015, the member for Timmins-James Bay, Monsieur Bisson, rose on a question of privilege with respect to the government's appointment of a temporary Ombudsman by order in council without first securing a House address requesting the appointment. The member contended that this amounted to a contempt of the House. The government House leader, Mr. Naqvi, also spoke to the matter and provided my office with a written submission that responded to the notice that the member for Timmins-James Bay had filed with my office on the previous day.

Having reviewed Hansard, both members' written submissions, and our precedents and procedural authorities, I am now ready to rule.

By way of background on last week's developments, let me remind members that on May 31 of this year, the then incumbent Ombudsman's second full-term appointment had expired. As of June 1, he was serving as Ombudsman during an extension requested by the House that expired on September 14, 2015. When September 14 arrived, the Ombudsman's incumbency ended. The government responded to this by securing the passage of an order in council appointing a temporary Ombudsman, effective on September 15. This appointment was not preceded by a House address requesting the appointment.

The member for Timmins-James Bay contends that an address should have preceded passage of that order in council and that, especially because the House was actually sitting on September 14, 2015, declining to present it with a substantive motion to debate and adopt was an intentional exercise in circumventing the role of the assembly. The government House leader contends that the government was simply adhering to section 7 of the Ombudsman Act, which does not require an address.

Like today, this process was previously contested on one other occasion. On the cusp of the expiry of André Marin's first term as Ombudsman in 2010, the government, by order in council, appointed Mr. Marin as temporary Ombudsman for a six-month term, citing section 7 of the Ombudsman Act. This appointment was made without a preceding address of the House, though the House was then meeting. The then House leader of the third party, Mr. Peter Kormos, raised an objection in the House about how this circumvented the role of the assembly, using this objection as oral notice of his intent to pursue the matter in the future. In the event, this did not occur and the matter was never revisited.

The member for Timmins-James Bay asserts that there is a parliamentary practice or tradition that a House address should precede the actual appointment of a parliamentary officer. In reviewing the history of the office of the Ombudsman, I have learned that a temporary Ombudsman has been appointed, or the temporary Ombudsman's appointment has been extended, on 15 occasions since the creation of that office in the 1970s. In some instances, the House was in session but not meeting at the time; in others, the House was meeting; and in others, the House was prorogued. Regardless of the status of the House, though, in each of the 15 cases except one, the temporary Ombudsman was appointed by order in council and without the House having previously adopted an address requesting the appointment.

With respect to the one exception that I noted, this occurred on May 28 of this year, when the House passed an address requesting the extension of the appointment of the then incumbent Ombudsman up to September 14, 2015. This address preceded by five days the order in council that effected the extension, but the reason why this interim appointment was dealt with in this way is completely unknown to me.

It is not for the Speaker to judge the validity or legality of an order in council, or to attempt to interpret the Ombudsman Act, or to examine the validly made decisions of the House, but I can find that the process used in the current case is entirely consistent with the process used on numerous occasions and continuously since 1978.

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I thank the member from Timmins–James Bay for raising this matter, but I cannot find that he has established a *prima facie* case of contempt.

I also thank the government House leader for speaking to this matter and for his written submissions.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Patrick Brown: A question to the Premier: A Liberal Premier once stood in this House and asked about the compensation paid to the Hydro One CEO. That Premier said, “Why is it that with all your Bay Street savvy and financial acumen,” in Ontario, we were paying more than Quebec for our CEO?

With cheaper rates than Ontario, the boss of Hydro-Québec must be doing a great job.

I would like to pose a similar question to this Liberal Premier. Mr. Speaker, with all the savviness and financial acumen in Ontario, why are we expected to pay almost 10 times the salary that Quebec does for their hydro CEO?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Energy will want to speak to the details, but I know that the Leader of the Opposition, who has in the past commented on the ability of the private sector to run certain operations better than government, understands that the private sector often does a better job.

What we have done is we have made a decision to broaden the ownership of Hydro One. We’ve decided to do that in a way that is prudent because we know that we need to make investments in infrastructure.

Underlying this question is an assumption, I can only assume, by the Leader of the Opposition that we don’t need to invest in infrastructure, that he doesn’t think it’s necessary to build the roads and bridges in communities like the one we were in yesterday for the plowing match, and he doesn’t think that we should invest in transit. I disagree with him on that, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: The Premier is going to give the private sector a bad name if she thinks it’s responsible to pay 10 times the price of the Hydro-Québec CEO.

Let me say that the top five executives at Hydro One will make \$24 million when you tally all the perks, with \$4 million alone for the new CEO. After this year, the

people of Ontario will never know how much higher that salary will grow year after year.

The Premier says that Ontario will continue to have control of Hydro One after the fire sale. Mr. Speaker, my question is very direct. Will the Premier disclose, year after year, the salaries of the Hydro One execs?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would just say to the Leader of the Opposition that he should know that the salaries of the CEO will be disclosed. They are regulated under the Ontario Securities Commission. He knows that perfectly well—or he should know.

I just want to quote from an article that was in the *Globe and Mail* yesterday, because it’s very important that we put this process in context.

“Premier Kathleen Wynne was re-elected last fall with a mandate to reinvest in the province, particularly through transit and infrastructure projects that are expected to fuel growth.... Much respect to the Premier for embracing such a difficult choice....

“The Liberals—advised by Mr. Clark, Alan Hibben and Torys LLP—are executing this beautifully. They’ve persuaded Bay Street to accept some of the lowest IPO underwriting fees imaginable,” and addressed the biggest problems that made the privatization of Highway 407—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: The salary is disclosed, not the total compensation.

Everywhere I go across Ontario, from Kitchener to Cornwall, families and seniors tell me they are concerned about how to pay their hydro bills. They know it’s going to get worse. It’s expected to rise 42%. They are forced to choose between heating and eating. In the face of this hardship, this Premier is giving the new Hydro One CEO a \$4-million salary.

So my question is this: Is it fair to ask this of Ontario families struggling to pay their hydro bills, and then at the same time hand out multi-million-dollar contracts for execs at Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Leader of the Opposition should know, but he may not, that Hydro One doesn’t set hydro rates. He would know that the Ontario Energy Board sets hydro rates.

But I want to go back to the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I said in my first answer, Mr. Speaker, the assumption under these questions from the opposition is that it is not necessary in Ontario to develop the roads and the bridges and the transit that we know we need for our economic well-being. The assumption is, as they did when they were in government, that can be put off for another generation. We can just fall into a deficit of infrastructure investment in this province, in the same way that they allowed that to happen between 1995 and 2003.

We’re not going to do that, Mr. Speaker. We’re not taking their example.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. It's one thing to make a bad decision; it's another thing to never allow anyone to fix that mistake. Last week, a clause in the Hydro One prospectus revealed that once Hydro One is sold, the government will never again be allowed to own more than 45%. The people of Ontario will never again have control of Hydro One.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier remove that clause from the updated prospectus?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, the Leader of the Opposition would know, if he had read the IPO, that the people of Ontario will retain de facto control of Hydro One. The fact is that he would know, if he read the IPO, that the compensation policy is public. It's on page 134 of the preliminary prospectus. He would have that information.

We've made a difficult decision, Mr. Speaker. We've made a difficult decision because we know that investing in infrastructure in this province is critical to our future. It's critical to our competitiveness. It's critical to our productivity. We are going to make those investments. We are going to broaden the ownership of Hydro One, and we're doing it in a prudent and cautious way.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is again for the Premier. The Premier recently said she still calls Dalton McGuinty the boss when answering his emails. Well, the boss said, "Selling off [Hydro One] is a bad idea.... It's a quick fix, and it's a bad one." I wonder, in Mr. McGuinty's future emails, if he'll continue to tell her it's a bad deal.

Mr. Speaker, can the Premier explain why she's ignoring her boss's suggestions and stopping future governments of any stripe from fixing her mistakes?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, Mr. Speaker, I just want to go back to the process, because I was reading a commentary on it and I didn't get to complete it, and I'd just like to go back to that. This is a quote from yesterday's *Globe and Mail*: "The Liberals—advised by Mr. Clark, Alan Hibben and Torys LLP—are executing this beautifully. They've persuaded Bay Street to accept some of the lowest IPO underwriting fees imaginable ... and they've addressed the biggest problems that made the privatization of the 407 toll highway such a boondoggle."

This is a well-run process. That's the commentary that we're getting from people who actually pay attention to business and understand what this is about.

We're going to invest in infrastructure. It's important for the future of this province. It's important to the quality of life of people across this province, Mr. Speaker, and that's why we're going to make those investments.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier: At the International Plowing Match, I heard from hundreds of farmers who are opposed to the sale of

Hydro One. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture noted that the fire sale will cost rural Ontario between \$5 billion and \$10 billion in inflated energy rates.

The Premier isn't in it for rural Ontario. She's not in it for farmers. My question is, why does the Premier show up for a photo op at the International Plowing Match but at the same time ignore their pleas and concerns over the fire sale of Hydro One and how it's going to hurt farmers and how it's going to hurt rural Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It was a great privilege for all of us to be at the International Plowing Match yesterday. It was one of those moments when really non-partisan support of a sector was very, very important because the people who were sitting in those stands, who were listening to the speeches—what they're concerned about is their family's farm. They're concerned about their food processing businesses. They're concerned about their communities; they want their communities to be strong.

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What they know is that they need broadband, they need natural gas extensions, they need hookups so their businesses can thrive, they can hire more people and those farms can be sustainable or those greenhouses can be sustainable. That's the future of farming. Those are the investments we're making. That's part of the infrastructure that needs investment in this province.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I might have to stay on the same path.

New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The government released the Hydro One prospectus and it confirms what Ontarians have been so worried about.

The Premier is saying one thing to investors and the opposite to Ontarians. The Premier has told Ontarians that the government will maintain de facto control. In fact, she just said it a few minutes ago. The prospectus confirms in black and white that "the province will engage in the business and affairs of Hydro One as an investor and not as a manager."

So why is this Premier handing control of Hydro One to wealthy investors and a small group of her friends instead of taking care and protecting the interests of Ontarians, the people who actually own Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the ability to remove the board, the ability to remove the CEO, the necessity of a board that has 40% ownership by the people of Ontario, to have two thirds of that board agree to major decisions—I think that's a fairly high degree of control. Those are the protections that we have put in

place. Those are the protections that were not in place when the 407 was sold off in a fire sale.

We've learned the lessons from the past. We've learned the lessons from what the Conservative government did, but we've also learned other lessons, and those lessons are that you can't spend a generation not investing in infrastructure and still expect to be competitive on the global scene. You just can't do that. That's what was done by governments before us.

We're not going to do that. We're going to invest in roads and bridges and broadband and gas hookups. That's the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Hydro One prospectus announces a "new approach to executive compensation." This new approach, it seems, is to give Hydro One executives a big fat raise. The former CEO of Hydro One will continue to collect half a million dollars just to stay on as an adviser and the new CEO stands to make up to \$4 million per year. That's a fivefold raise. The new CFO of Hydro One stands to make about \$1.5 million a year.

While Ontarians are struggling to pay their bills, why is this Premier handing away millions upon millions of dollars to fatten Hydro One executives' paycheques?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The leader of the third party knows that Hydro One will be regulated by the Ontario Business Corporations Act, the Ontario Securities Act and the Ontario Energy Board. She knows those regulations will remain in place.

She also knows that Hydro One can be a better-run company. If we want Hydro One to be a strong and professionally run company, then we need the talent there to do that work. That is part of what we are doing here, working to make Hydro One a better-run company. Some 24% of people in Ontario are served by Hydro One and we want to make sure that they are served in the best way possible.

But underlying this decision is our decision to invest in the people of Ontario, to invest in the infrastructure that is needed across the province for 2015 and beyond. We are leveraging this asset so we can invest in future infrastructure.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: In addition to the Premier's new approach to handing out huge salaries, the members of the Hydro One board will also be lavishly rewarded. Board directors will be paid \$160,000 a year and the chair of the board will be paid \$260,000 a year. This is over 20 times more than what the directors are paid at publicly owned Manitoba Hydro—and in Manitoba, customers pay less than half of what Ontario customers are paying.

This Premier needs to get her priorities straight and pay attention to the hard-working people of this province. Why is the Premier asking the families and businesses of Ontario to pay for lavish salaries of the Hydro One board executives?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The compensation is in line with similar privately held energy companies throughout Canada. It's not out of line with other energy companies. I think the leader of the third party knows that.

The leader of the third party makes a reference to Manitoba. I recall that it was the NDP that actually was in negotiation with Manitoba and cancelled the deal to take advantage of some of that cheap hydro power.

Mr. Speaker, I will tell the leader of the third party that we are in conversation with Quebec and with Manitoba because we think that, given their geography and given their capacity, we can find ways to come up with agreements. We've already done that with Quebec so that we can find the best price for the cheapest power—the best and most reliable power—for the people of Ontario. We're going to continue to do that, but we're also going to invest in—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. When the Premier first formed Ed Clark's panel, she promised that any decision would be "transparent, professional and independently validated." That is exactly what we need, Speaker, and that's exactly what this Premier has refused to do.

The Ontario Energy Board has a mandate under the law to protect the interests of consumers with respect to prices and the adequacy, reliability and quality of electricity service. It's hard to imagine anything that would have a greater impact on electricity service than the sell-off of Hydro One.

Will this Premier break her promise that she made to Ontarians, that this process will be transparent, professional and independently validated, or will she order an open and transparent review by the OEB?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just follow the thread here. The leader of the third party has said that she is concerned about electricity rates. We have said, as she knows, that the Ontario Energy Board sets electricity rates in Ontario. They have done so and they will continue to. So that's the first part of the puzzle. Now the leader of the third party is saying that she wants the Ontario Energy Board—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward—Hastings.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: She wants the Ontario Energy Board to review the broadening of the ownership of Hydro One, Mr. Speaker. The fact is that she has recognized that the Ontario Energy Board is an independent, public, non-partisan body. They will continue to be that, and they are the protection on energy rates.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, this Premier is plowing ahead with the Hydro One sell-off with no public

consultation, with no independent analysis and with no mandate from the people of this province.

The government has the authority to require that the OEB examine any question on energy, and the OEB can deliver exactly what this Premier has refused to do. They can deliver the kind of broad and transparent public hearings that the people of this province deserve.

It's time to stop the secrecy of this sell-off, Speaker, open the doors on the Liberals' backrooms and bring some transparency, some public accountability and scrutiny to this sell-off. The Premier promised that Ontarians would have a "transparent, professional and independently validated" process. The question is: Will she keep her promise and order the open and transparent review by the OEB?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member is acknowledging in her motion—she's recognizing that the Ontario Energy Board is an independent, public, non-partisan body, and they will continue to set rates. She's acknowledging that they are what they are, which is non-partisan and independent. So the fact is that if her concern is about energy rates, as she has said loudly across province—that's her concern—then she should understand that the Ontario Energy Board, which sets those rates and which is non-partisan and independent—that is the protection for the people of Ontario. That's what we've been saying all along and that's what we will continue to—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward-Hastings, second time.

You have a one sentence wrap-up.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've made my point.
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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This Premier promised to actually listen to Ontarians. Well, Ontarians are sending her a very, very clear message on the sell-off of Hydro One. From the government's own polling, we know that three out of four Ontarians want to keep Hydro One in public hands. What is most appalling is that this Premier is plowing ahead with this sale, with no public consultation, no independent analysis and no mandate from the people of Ontario, and I know that the Liberal members in the backbenches are hearing it every day from their constituents. Ontarians want the Premier to live up to her promise for an open and transparent process.

Will this Premier allow a free vote from the Liberal members on our opposition day motion this afternoon to direct the OEB to hold public hearings so that these members can actually stand up with their constituents in opposition to the sell-off of Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We ran on a platform last year to look at the assets of this province as part of a broader process, and that process was: How are we going to invest in the infrastructure that is needed in this province?

We ran on a platform to make—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:—an historical investment in infrastructure in this province. It's not easy for a government to make that decision. It's not easy to make the choices, and I know that we are making a very difficult choice. The leader of the third party doesn't need to tell me that this is a difficult choice, because we've had the discussions within our caucus. I know that it's a challenge. I know that it's a challenge, but the greater challenge, Mr. Speaker, is to make decisions now that are going to handicap us in the future, that are going to not allow us to grow as an economy in the future, to be competitive and to be productive.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is to the Premier. Today the Premier received a letter from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce with many questions about the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. That letter was signed by a coalition of 43 local chambers of commerce, 93 employers and 13 business associations. The chamber's latest survey shows that 44% of businesses will cut jobs or freeze hiring because of the ORPP.

The chamber, the employers and their business associations want to know how the ORPP will impact Ontario's economy—to date, you have provided no such data. Will the Premier explain why she is ignoring the call from Ontario's job creators for economic data to support the ORPP?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Associate Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mitzi Hunter: I want to thank the member opposite for her question. I have met with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and its members extensively in the past year. In fact, the president of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce is one of the first individuals that I sat down with when the Premier asked me to take on this file.

I note that in the letter that was sent by the OCC they have said, "The Ontario Chamber of Commerce ... continues to support the government's policy objective—to ensure that all Ontarians are adequately prepared for their retirement."

The OCC gets that when people retire, they need to have a predictable stream of income so that they can continue to spend into the retirement years that are ahead of them. That's important for business, that's important for our communities, and I really wish the opposition would—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Julia Munro: We can't wait until the end of the year. Where is the economic analysis of the Premier's pension now? We've had enough of feel-good emotional arguments and meetings around the province. We need data. We need to know how many people will lose their jobs. We need to know how many more companies will

shut their doors. We need to know how many companies will not come to Ontario.

The leaked cabinet document that we have states that Ontario could lose 40,000 jobs. That's a staggering number of people losing their jobs at the whim of the Premier.

Will the Premier stop stalling and admit that her new pension plan will cost thousands of jobs, harm the gross domestic product and scare away investment?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows better.

In fact, it was your amendment that we accepted—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Please continue.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Mr. Speaker, it was the PCs' proposed amendment that we accepted at committee that committed the government to provide a cost-benefit analysis by the end of the year. That was your amendment. We accepted that and included that in the final legislation.

We are listening to business. In fact, we recently have announced that the government intends to ensure that we expand the definition of "comparable plan," which would be of assistance to many capital accumulation plans. We are listening to business. They need to plan, and they need to prepare for the introduction of the ORPP. We've ensured that we've responded to them and their concerns.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Earlier this morning, the Premier dragged the media away from this House so that she could stand beside Ed Clark and talk about beer. But last Friday, when Ed Clark released a prospectus showing that our hydro bills would soon be padded with fat raises for Hydro One executives and board directors, the Premier was nowhere to be found.

I can understand why. Beer has been a great distraction from the Hydro One sell-off.

Will the Premier stop trying to use beer to distract us and instead explain to Ontarians why their hydro bills are going up in order to pad the pockets of Bay Street executives and investors?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The critic for energy—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward—Hastings is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The critic for energy from the third party has been around here for a long time. He knows what the Ontario Energy Board does, Mr. Speaker. As a matter of fact, it's included here in a letter that the leader of the third party sent to the Premier, basically saying that the Ontario Energy Board is legislated to protect the interests of consumers with respect to prices

and the adequacy, reliability and quality of electricity service.

They will continue to do that, Mr. Speaker—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy House leader.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —and they have shown over and over again that when OPG or Hydro One comes with a request for an increase, and if their salaries are too high, executive pensions are too high, they roll them back, and they don't give them the increase that they are asking for. It is a credible, objective measure protecting the public.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, that was a classic non-answer.

Speaker, back to the Premier. Only this Premier would use her support for a privately run beer monopoly as a way to distract from her support for a privately run hydro monopoly. She has also used beer to distract from her OPP investigations, and today she used beer to distract from the Auditor General's report on CCACs. But Ontarians refuse to be distracted. They're deeply concerned about the Hydro One fire sale, and nearly 80% of Ontarians expect their bills to go up.

A majority of Ontarians strongly oppose the Hydro One sell-off. Will the Premier stop trying to distract Ontarians with beer and instead listen to them and stop this reckless and short-sighted sale of Hydro One?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member of that party and the leader of that party forget that they lost the last election. In the last election, we campaigned on repositioning assets, whether that's the Beer Store or the LCBO, and it specifically mentioned the agencies that are dealing in the energy business. So we talked about it in the election campaign; we brought it forward; we debated it in the budget. We're fulfilling the mandate that we sought from the public of Ontario. We're fulfilling the mandate that this House approved, having the majority of votes here. It's the right thing to do. It's the responsible thing to do. I would refer the third party to the Globe and Mail article of yesterday, which puts this thing in perspective.

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FIRST RESPONDERS

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Over the summer, I heard several media reports about the impacts of post-traumatic stress disorder. This is an issue that I have been following closely and, like many in this House, I believe that more must be done. We need to ensure that the first responders in my riding and throughout Ontario—the brave firefighters, hard-working paramedics, dedicated police officers and numerous others who risk their lives to keep our communities and our families safe—are given all the protections and support that they need.

I know that the minister hosted a summit earlier this year to bring together front-line workers and experts in this area, and I'm hopeful that this was a first step in the

right direction for positive change with respect to PTSD. Can the minister provide us with an update on what he's doing to help front-line workers and those living with PTSD?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member for that very important question. We all know that post-traumatic stress disorder is a very serious condition. All members of this House will know how it disproportionately affects those front-line workers who serve us so well. In turn, I think all members of this House would also agree that we need to ensure that they have the protection and the resources that they need at the time they need it most.

That's why, as the member previously mentioned, we did host a summit on work-related traumatic mental stress earlier this year. The goal was to generate open and frank discussions and solutions on issues surrounding PTSD, and, Speaker, it worked. We're keeping this important exchange of ideas and best practices going. We're now working to take those ideas to the solution stage to change how we approach workplace traumatic mental stress through both prevention and treatment, and how the WSIB handles it. We're pushing forward on this issue; I'm hoping all members will support that push.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I thank the minister for that answer. I am pleased to hear that he is taking action on this file. We all must work together in this area. We owe it to the front-line workers in each of our communities. We must progress the conversation on PTSD so that it leads to continued change for Ontarians.

It is essential that the minister continues to take this issue seriously and that he looks to even more that can be done. Mr. Speaker, I am interested in the minister explaining what his next steps are in addressing PTSD.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thanks again to the member. There are people in Ontario speaking out who are asking very, very important questions about work-related traumatic mental stress. I want to particularly thank the member from Parkdale-High Park for championing this issue, for making sure that she has kept it on the minds of the people who represent Ontarians in this House, because I want Ontario to be a leader in not just responding, but in the prevention, the resiliency, the training and the supports that are needed for first responders, and in how we might improve things—for example, how we deal with them at the WSIB.

We've looked at best practices around the country. We've looked at what Alberta and British Columbia have done. We want an Ontario-grown solution. We want to be a leader in this regard. This is something we need to get right. We need to get it right the first time. I'm convinced we're ready to move on it.

TAXATION

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question today is to the Premier. The government recently made significant changes to the estate administration tax, including the

threat of harsh fines and jail time for estate trustees. Ontario families deserve compassion when dealing with the death of a loved one, but it's clear that when the Liberal government made these changes, their priority was the bottom line and getting their cut of the estate as quickly as possible.

Mr. Speaker, does the Premier honestly believe that it is the reasonable approach to generate \$143 million of government revenue on the backs of dead people and their grieving families?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I do understand that the member has introduced a bill that looks to amend the estate administration tax. This is very interesting, because it was in fact implemented in 1998 by the very party that he represents today. Let's be very, very clear: The government has not introduced a new tax on estates. The government has not changed the amount of estate administration tax. It has not changed the way the tax is calculated, Speaker.

Let's be very clear: What the member is doing is he's looking to reduce the taxes paid by the most wealthy people in this province. So let's be clear about what this is. He wants to cut taxes for the most wealthy, which results in cutting services to everyone else.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Premier: Not only is this a tax imposed on grieving families, it's a tax levied on the charitable bequests and donations of the deceased. So if someone leaves a portion of their estate to a local charity after they're gone, this government collects tax on the amount of that donation. The federal government has been introducing incentives to encourage giving to charity while this Liberal government is profiting from charitable donations.

My question to the Premier is this: Why does she find it necessary to nickel and dime grieving families and charities?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, again, let's be very clear. We are not looking at increasing the amounts. We are not looking at a new tax. The member opposite wants to cut taxes on those who have the most.

On this side of the House, our focus is on making sure that those who need the most benefit the most. On that side of the House, they want to benefit those who have the most.

HOME CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre. My question is not about beer this morning. It is about the Auditor General.

The public accounts committee, a committee of this Legislature, asked the Auditor General to conduct an audit of our 14 community care access centres who administer home care for this province. The reason we had asked the Auditor General to do this was because we had a hard time finding out how much of the \$2.4 billion

spent with CCACs actually reaches the bedside, actually reaches the patient. The Auditor General delivered, and she told us that 38% of the money spent—that's \$912 million of the money spent—never reaches the patients. Did you know this? Do you agree with this?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question. I notice the Auditor General hasn't yet released her report formally. She has shared it in confidence with the committee, but I look forward to her actually holding a press conference at 12 o'clock to formally release the details of her report and her recommendations.

I've had the opportunity in the last couple of days to speak with the Auditor General about the force of the recommendations in that report, and I'll have an opportunity to respond. After she speaks to it publicly at noon, I'll have an opportunity to meet with the media shortly after.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: You released the report, Speaker, and hopefully somebody can bring a copy to the minister.

This \$912 million that does not reach—there are moneys that reach the patient side, but the Auditor General will make it clear that of the money that reaches the patient side, no analysis was ever done to see if the money was spent with results. The Auditor General made it clear that there are no standards that have been applied to this money to make sure we guarantee access, that we guarantee quality of care or care levels.

None of the work that is the responsibility of the government has been done, yet we see private contractor CEOs making over \$1 million a year while PSWs take home about \$20,000 a year.

Our home care system is broken, Premier. It is broken and it needs to be fixed. It needs you to take it seriously so that the people who depend on home care can actually get it. When will the minister take his responsibility seriously?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I was in the Legislature at 10:30. We weren't aware that the Auditor General was going to be releasing it at that time. The report is now available online, as the member opposite mentioned.

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We are doing what the member opposite is asking us to do. In fact, we were the party that increased, over the next three years, a \$750-million investment in our home and community care. I released, on behalf of the government, earlier this year a 10-point plan—a Patients First road map as well—to make, I would say, highly significant reforms in our home and community care sector to make sure that we're continuing to make patient care, the quality of care that is provided by our health care professionals across this province, of the highest standard possible.

I'll have the opportunity to speak in detail with regard to the Auditor General's report. I want to give her the opportunity to address formally the media and the general public at noon. I'll be following shortly after.

INTERNATIONAL PLOWING MATCH

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, it was a beautiful day yesterday in Finch, Ontario, host of this year's International Plowing Match, where our caucus had a great opportunity to be part of the festivities.

In 2014, I was fortunate to be in Ivy, Ontario, not far from Barrie, when the International Plowing Match took place, and in 2012, when my region of Waterloo proudly hosted this event not far from my rural home. In my community of Cambridge and North Dumfries township, many of my neighbours are farmers. In fact, my next-door neighbour raises cattle and grows corn and soybeans.

The International Plowing Match is truly a celebration of all things agriculture. I know what a great event this is and how it showcases Ontario agriculture. Speaker, could the minister please inform the House about the history of the International Plowing Match and its impact on rural communities?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member from Cambridge for that excellent question this morning. It's correct: All members of the House yesterday enjoyed a wonderful day in Finch, Ontario, in the riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. I want to thank the current member for that riding and I want to thank the former member for that riding, who was the chair. I also want to acknowledge the work yesterday by good friends opposite from Haldimand–Norfolk and Timiskaming–Cochrane, who had the opportunity to visit with many agricultural representatives there.

The International Plowing Match, of course, has a very distinguished, 102-year history. It's run by a large, extensive network of volunteers, and I want to take this opportunity to thank every one of those volunteers, who did a superb job at the International Plowing Match yesterday.

The International Plowing Match generates \$15 million in economic activity—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Jeff Leal: —and we were expecting 75,000 people to visit Finch, Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I stand, you sit. Supplementary?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Thank you, Minister. The agricultural community is at the forefront of innovation, and continues to grow and expand. I had the chance to speak to a number of vendors and learn from them about a wide variety of equipment that's available to farmers today.

Farmers are woven into the fabric of rural Ontario, and this event is an opportunity for members from all regions of the province to visit vibrant rural communities in Ontario. Our government knows how important rural communities are to this province, and it's why we're making investments like the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund or the Eastern and Southwestern Ontario Develop-

ment Funds. These investments are helping to create jobs and grow local economies.

Speaker, can the minister expand on the importance of the International Plowing Match to Ontario's agriculture community and to the fabric of rural Ontario?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member for the supplementary question. You are right: The IPM is helping small towns and rural communities like Finch showcase their community. It's an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to talk about the Premier's challenge: 120,000 new jobs in this sector by the year 2020. We shine a spotlight on small towns and communities. I remember Mr. Davis used to say, when he was Premier of Ontario, that Ontario is still a province of small towns with big dreams. That is part of the theme at this year's IPM: the link to the past, looking to the future.

Mr. Speaker, all of us in this House—and I hope my geography is correct this morning—will be at Harriston next year; I believe it's in the riding of Perth-Wellington. I think I got the geography correct.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Mr. Michael Harris: Speaker, to the Premier: Three months after this Premier launched the UP Express luxury ride to Pearson, ridership is going anywhere but up. After spending taxpayers' millions on unnecessary boutique terminal facades and retro uniforms, the Premier and her transportation minister have opted for fare pricing out of reach for most to pay for their luxury access. The problem is, it's hard to make up for that access when you've turned off your customers with high prices, leading to trains at 10% ridership capacity and less than half of what the government is projecting.

The luxury access has been bought and paid for. The train has left the station on that. Will the Premier now clean up her minister's mess and lower fares so passengers can afford the ride on what's becoming a white elephant on rails?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to thank the member opposite for that question. Obviously, he is correct in that he says that the UP Express service launched back on June 6. The goal that Metrolinx and our government had was that by the end of year 1, ridership would be at around the 5,000 mark. I know that the team at Metrolinx and the team at UP Express are working very hard on a very ambitious plan to go forward to encourage more take-up or usage of this particular service.

Of course, this is the first time that we've had a dedicated air-rail link here in this region from Pearson to Union. It's also important to recognize these are trains that run in 15-minute intervals for 19 and a half hours a day. The trip itself takes approximately 25 minutes, and I will say anecdotally that every single individual I've had the chance to speak with in this region, and even some members in this House who have taken this, understand that it's a wonderful experience.

It's a great way to get to the airport. We'll continue to work on this file.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Back to the Premier: When you're swimming in debt, you don't go out and buy a Mercedes. But that's what they did, even contracting for \$4.5 million with a prestigious design firm for just the right extravagant touches.

Riders just want to get from A to B, and yet every shiny new bell and whistle the Premier forced them to pay for drove the price to ride up and actual ridership down. That's why we have 14 riders on a 173-seat train. Even Metrolinx admits the ridership is well short of their targets.

Both Vancouver and Chicago offer similar airport links for under \$10. In Ontario, it's \$27.50. Will the Premier put the brakes on unaffordable luxury fares before her retro ride becomes the Pearson ghost express?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I know that the member opposite would want to make sure that the record here in this Legislature clearly reflected the reality of the fare itself. With a Presto card—and I know that as transportation critic for that caucus, he would support fare and service integration across the GTHA—the fare for the entire trip is \$19, not the number that he referenced.

As well, it's important to recognize that in locations around the world, when you're comparing apples to apples—for example in Norway and in London with the Heathrow Express, and the Narita Express in Tokyo—the fare that's set in those communities, in those jurisdictions, for their dedicated air-rail links is actually more expensive than that \$19 fare I referenced a second ago.

I also have to say that there are members of this Legislature on all three sides of the House who have had the chance to take the UP Express, and they recognized it is a success. It was delivered on time, it was delivered on budget, and again, for the first time between two of our busiest hubs in Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Premier. Here we are, another day and another missed opportunity because the Premier refuses to negotiate with teachers. In fact, it's the first Wynne Wednesday.

While I know the Liberal government is used to being able to impose contracts on teachers, it's high time the Premier tells her minister to get back to the table and get a fair deal with public elementary teachers. The longer labour unrest persists, the more responsibility the Premier holds for putting student learning conditions at risk—as if a \$500-million cut from education wasn't bad enough.

Will the Premier commit to getting the Minister of Education back to the table today, yes or no?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm actually very pleased to update the House on the progress that we've made since I was here to last give you an update. Last Wednesday, we reached a tentative agreement with the francophone teachers. They have suspended their proposed job action while we await ratification.

This deal is notable because it's the first tentative agreement at a multiple-employer table. It involved both the French public and the French Catholic trustee associations. That bodes well for organizations like CUPE and the OSSTF education workers, which are also multiple-employer tables, so I'm very pleased about that.

Obviously, I'm very happy that we got ratification of our deals with OSSTF and OECTA on Friday.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: If the minister was at the bargaining table, she just might get an agreement with ETFO as well.

Back to the Premier: The cookie-cutter our-way-or-the-highway approach to contract negotiations isn't working. Teachers' working conditions and student learning conditions must be protected. Our schools are in chaos due to more than a decade of chronic underfunding.

My question is simple: Is the Premier too busy selling off Hydro One to get back to the table and meaningfully negotiate with teachers?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm not sure I see the connection.

Let's just review what has happened. We have reached tentative agreements, or actually ratified agreements now, with three out of four of our teacher unions. We have put on the table an agreement which reflects the fiscal parameters that we have settled with the other three teachers' unions. ETFO said they wanted no change to class size; we did not change the class size in our offer to them. They said no change to prep time; we did not change our prep time in the offer that is on the table.

We have made an offer which is similar to the agreements with the other three, and we await a response from ETFO. What is wrong with the deal that everybody else has agreed to?

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, this summer your ministry launched a consultation to support a renewed Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy. Every Ontarian deserves to have a stable, affordable home, and I know that addressing the demand for affordable housing is a key priority for the government and your ministry.

The first affordable housing strategy, released in 2010, set a strong foundation for a more efficient, accessible system for affordable housing. But the reality is that much has changed in the past five years.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain to this House why the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy is being updated?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Mr. Speaker, I sure can, and I want to thank the member from Scarborough–Rouge River for his question.

In my ongoing consultation with municipal leaders, the need to build more affordable housing has emerged as one of their pre-eminent concerns. Concerns about affordable housing were raised in more than half of the delegations that I received at this year's AMO conference, and that's up from about 10% in previous years, so it's obviously a growing articulation of a need.

The new Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy—
Interjections.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: The party that downloaded social housing without any supports might be interested in this—needs to reflect this growing need for housing in our province and put forward creative and innovative solutions to better respond.

Affordable housing is, in my view, a critical part of social infrastructure, so I continue to be focused on working with municipalities, the private sector, housing advocates and, of course, my caucus colleagues about the need to move forward in this area, because it's important—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Our government knows that in order for Ontarians to realize their full potential, they need to be provided with the right supports for success.

As you say, Minister, throughout the summer, you received feedback from our municipal partners, at AMO and through visits to municipal councils. You also sought ideas from the public, from the private sector and from municipalities and other housing partners.

Securing a home that will allow us to live productive, fulfilling lives is a fundamental need that affects all of us and can generate varied responses from those with a range of varied experiences when it comes to talking about how to increase affordable housing options.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister inform the members of this House on the input he has received to date from all these stakeholders?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Speaker, I'd be pleased to do that as well.

We wanted to hear Ontarians' views on how we can make the province's range of housing work better for them and their families. We want to provide municipalities with the right tools to locally respond to the housing needs of their most vulnerable members. We also want to incent leaders in the private sector to partner with us in this important work.

We are leaving no stone unturned with this new strategy, and are looking at a broad, comprehensive range of solutions.

As the current federal government continues to forsake communities in provinces all across this country in failing to commit to a national housing strategy, we know there's much more to do, and that's exactly why providing access to affordable housing is a key part of our government's plan to build Ontario up, and why I look forward to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is for the Minister of Education. I want to talk to you today about the Liberal government's cuts to special education and, in particular, about the impact of 50 educational assistant job cuts on special-needs students in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

I have a particular case to bring to your attention. This one involved two boys: Owen, 11, and Noah, six, diagnosed as autistic. Owen and Noah should be in grade 6 and grade 1 respectively, but they are not. In fact, they're at home. They're at home because no public nor Catholic school in Hanover can enrol them, not after this government's budget cut 50 educational assistants in my riding.

My question is simple: What does the minister say to the stressed and frustrated parents suffering from these education cuts and, most importantly, to the students forced to stay at home?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I think we actually need to look at what has happened with special education funding. We have had an increase of special education funding of \$225.7 million since we took office. About 68% is the amount that it has increased by since 2002-03. So we have not cut special education funding. In fact, we've increased the per pupil funding both for special education and the overall per pupil funding. What has happened is that we're up to a spend of \$2.72 billion this year. That's what has happened—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Back to the Minister of Education: It doesn't matter how the minister slices and dices it; Owen and Noah and other special-needs students are denied their basic right to an education because of this government's cut to their budget.

How does this government justify spending \$5.7 million on the Toronto games executives' bonuses but can't afford to keep educational assistants in the classroom? This money would cover the rehiring of the 50 educational assistants and put enough resources in schools to help support Owen, Noah and every other special-needs student who I wrote her about recently.

Will the minister stand up and admit that the reason Owen and Noah are at home and not in the classroom is because this government is spending less money on special education, particularly in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Obviously, I can't comment on the situation of individual students. The families, the board and the school will need to work on the situation of individual families.

I think what we sometimes lose track of is that we do have situations where we have declining enrolment in boards. We actually do, and the board that the member opposite represents has less children. But that doesn't change the fact that the per capita funding for special-

needs children has continued to climb and that we have not cut special education funding.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Ridership levels on the nearly empty UPX train continue to plummet. It's actually dropped 23%, according to a Metrolinx report quietly released last week. This means that nine out of 10 seats on the UPX are empty.

I just heard the minister maintain that UPX is a success. He says, "We're pleased with the ridership so far." I guess Ontarians simply want to know this answer: How much will Ontarians pay to subsidize this luxury service for only a few business-class travellers that regular people can't afford to access and can't afford to take?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member for this question. I know we've had the chance, she and I, informally, to talk about this particular issue over the last number of months.

I said earlier in my response to the member from Kitchener that this is a service that has now been operating since June 6. That's a little bit more than three months. I don't think anyone here in the Legislature would suggest that we should make rash decisions around important transit concepts and projects that we have.

I said earlier that this is a project that was delivered on time and on budget for the community.

I know that people in the west end of Toronto, including in York South–Weston and in Davenport, where both of our members on this side have talked to me about the issue as well, are looking for alternatives to get to the downtown core. I would encourage that member and all members to remind the people living in these communities that there are two GO stations, one in Weston and one on Bloor, that do provide additional service for people who want to get downtown.

In the meantime, we'll continue to encourage more to use this service, and I anticipate we'll hit our target of 5,000 riders by June 6 next year.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1142 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to welcome to the House some wonderful people from Huron–Bruce, Nelson Robertson and Mike Smith, but I have to admit that I think they're here cheering for the Yankees. I'm not sure.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I can always call the Sergeant-at-Arms.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I would like to welcome some guests today from Community Living Elgin. I have

Steve Abdey, Christine Laverty and Ange Thompson. Welcome to the Legislature.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TRAGEDY IN RENFREW–NIPISSING– PEMBROKE

Mr. John Yakabuski: The peace and tranquility of the Madawaska Valley was shattered yesterday with the news of a fatal shooting. I was attending the International Plowing Match in Finch when I was first informed.

As the news developed, it got much worse. In the end, it turned out that three innocent women were the victims of a single male suspect who was later apprehended by police.

By now, everyone has heard or seen the news reports of how these tragic events unfolded. It is clear that the gunman knew his victims, knew their whereabouts, and methodically went about executing his plan to murder them.

I knew one of the victims, Anastasia Kuzyk. She was a hard-working and well-respected real estate agent working in the area. On a number of occasions, I would have spoken to her while she was working on a transaction with my wife, Vicky, who is also an agent.

The Madawaska Valley was in a state of shock, as this is not the kind of thing we expect to hear about. But it illustrates to all of us that we're not immune to the evil and criminal acts that rural people tend to associate with larger communities.

We are left with many questions as to why something like this could happen. How could someone do this? Some questions may never be answered, but as the investigation unfolds, some certainly will be.

I want to congratulate and thank the police for acting quickly, marshalling all the necessary resources and apprehending the suspect as quickly as they did. This allowed a lot of worried people to sleep better last night.

I also want to thank the staff and teachers in those schools that were in lockdown yesterday. They took care of our children during the emergency, and we're all grateful for that.

Finally, I want to thank the people of the valley for their co-operation and composure during this crisis.

Most importantly, on behalf of my constituents, I want to extend my heartfelt sympathies to the families and friends of the victims: Anastasia Kuzyk, Nathalie Warmerdam and Carol Culleton. Our thoughts and prayers are with you.

FRANCO-ONTARIAN DAY

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's an honour for me to stand in the House today and remind you that this Friday is Franco-Ontarian Day. As you know, Speaker, our province officially recognized and proclaimed Franco-Ontarian Day back in 2010.

Ontario is home to well over 600,000 francophones. This is the largest population of French-speaking Canadians outside of the province of Quebec. Forty years ago, we raised the Franco-Ontarian flag for the first time. This was a symbolic gesture recognizing and promoting contributions made by our French-speaking friends and neighbours in the development of Ontario's culture and in our shared history.

In my part of the province, we are home to the oldest continuous French settlement in Ontario, dating way back to the early 1700s. But even before the French settlers, the Jesuit missionaries were there as early as 1640. Étienne Brûlé used to be a trader along our waterfront. Sieur de Cadillac founded Fort Pontchartrain du Detroit, what we now know today as Detroit, just across the river from us.

On Friday morning, I will join my friend Gérard Malo, the local president of l'ACFO, the French-Canadian Association of Ontario, in raising the Franco-Ontarian flag at city hall in Windsor. Like myself, Gérard is a retired journalist who worked for the CBC, and, Speaker, I am so proud of his work these days in promoting French language and culture in Windsor–Tecumseh.

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURE

Mr. Granville Anderson: On August 12, I was fortunate enough to welcome members from all parties in our Legislature to Durham for the Ontario Federation of Agriculture's annual field day.

Everyone, of course, knows that the riding of Durham has a strong agricultural community, but Algoma Orchards and Wilmot Orchards in Newcastle were able to represent the many great family farms of Durham that supply Ontario with produce. I think people may have been surprised at how the farms in our community use a mix of technologies to ensure good agricultural products.

Algoma and Wilmot, as with all the family farms in Durham, are extraordinary corporate citizens for our area. Their products travel far and wide, but they keep their focus on the local community, sponsoring many programs and initiatives that help make Durham a great place to live. Ultimately, the farmers and their hard work give Durham the amazing character that it has. I was very glad to be able to join the OFA and so many members from our House to help showcase that.

Thank you to everyone who came out, and thank you to Wilmot and Algoma and the OFA. I look forward to seeing everyone at field day next year.

LANDFILL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: A group will be coming to the Legislature from the great riding of Oxford tomorrow to celebrate our proud heritage and to ask the government to protect our future by turning down the proposed landfill site. As I've explained in this Legislature previously, this proposal is to locate a landfill site at Beachville in an old

quarry. There are a number of concerns about the site, such as the fact that the landfill would be located on fractured bedrock.

My number one concern is the risk to our drinking water. This proposed landfill site is located close to the quarry lake, the Thames River and one of the town of Ingersoll's main wells. A leak would not have to travel far to contaminate the drinking water. As the mayor of Ingersoll often says, "Why take the risk?"

I want to commend the many people who have taken the time to raise their concerns through letters, petitions and coming to Queen's Park. I know how hard these volunteers have been working. They are raising money to help in these efforts, and they are taking steps to reduce the amount of waste produced in Oxford. Again, I commend them for their efforts.

I hope that tomorrow, all members will join me in welcoming this group to Queen's Park and take the time to listen to their concerns and to try and help solve their problems.

INTERNATIONAL PLOWING MATCH

Mr. John Vanthof: Yesterday, it was an honour to attend the plowing match in Finch along with many of my colleagues from across the House. For a lot of people, it is their once-a-year taste of rural culture.

But to truly understand the plowing match, the IPM, we should be able to go a month before and a week after, because a month ago, there was nothing on that site. There was no town, no streets, no water, no hydro. That was all built in the last month. If we go next week, it will all be gone. It will turn back to a farmer's field. That's a true demonstration of rural culture.

In Finch, as has happened every year, a group of community leaders got together four or five years ago and said, "You know what? We could do the plowing match." They gather 1,000 or so volunteers, and over three years of hard work, it culminates in that week. They pray they won't get rain that week, because if they get inches of rain it could be a disaster. They do this year in, year out, and that shows the strength of rural culture. They're forever optimists and forever working hard to make their communities better.

1510

I'd like to commend the people of Finch, the committee, and all plowing match committees throughout their history—the ones in the past and the ones we're going to have in the future. Congratulations.

COMMUNITY LIVING MISSISSAUGA

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to share with the House news of the great work that is being done in my riding of Mississauga-Brampton South by Community Living Mississauga.

On Thursday, September 10, I attended the grand opening of the Matheson community base site, which is just one part of an expansion of services in my riding.

The agency supports more than 2,300 people with intellectual disabilities, helping them to live with dignity and with a higher quality of lifestyle, where they belong, in our community. Their services are tailored to their clients' needs and interests, and they are very wide-ranging, including lifestyle planning, residential options, respite care services, day activities, advocacy and community engagement. The agency's work is made all the more important because they not only organize care for their clients, but also engage them meaningfully as contributors to society.

I would like to thank all the volunteers, staff and donors of Community Living Mississauga for their dedicated and very worthwhile work in support of our community.

GIN-COR INDUSTRIES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'm pleased to pay tribute to a business in my riding recently recognized on this year's list of Canada's fastest-growing companies. Gin-Cor Industries, based in Mattawa, ranked 276th out of 500, with five-year revenue growth of 209%. Gin-Cor's success has led to expansion across Ontario, with parts-and-service locations in Carleton Place and Kingston, and an affiliate company, Durabody Industries, located in Bond Head.

Gin-Cor is an industry leader in the custom manufacturing of specialized service vehicles. When you're on the road and see the Gin-Cor brand on dump trucks, snowplows, sanders, hook-lifts or roll-offs, you're looking at some of the best-built, best-backed pieces of equipment in Canada.

This is not the first honour of distinction for Gin-Cor. In 2012, president and CEO Luc Stang was named Entrepreneur of the Year at the Northern Ontario Business Awards. That same year, Gin-Cor was named Business of the Year by the North Bay and District Chamber of Commerce.

There is a long tradition of entrepreneurial success in Nipissing that spans our province, our country and indeed the globe.

On behalf of the people of Nipissing, I offer congratulations to Luc, his staff and everyone in the town of Mattawa. Well done, everybody.

SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: In my great riding of Barrie and many ridings across the province, there is a non-profit organization called the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. They provide a variety of different ways of assisting my community. One manner in which they help is by providing food vouchers and grocery assistance to people who qualify. They also give financial assistance to eligible parents who need help getting their children ready for school with books, clothes, shoes and backpacks filled with school supplies.

The help that the SSVP provides varies, depending on the amount of support it receives. That's why I'm proud of one of the ways my community helps support the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Every year, for the last four years, community volunteers have run a charity golf tournament where all the funds go to the SSVP's back-to-school assistance program. In the first year, the tournament raised \$722. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say that this year, the fourth year of the tournament, they raised \$5,140. All of that money is going to the back-to-school program.

But the tournament would be nothing without the amazing sponsors: sponsors like Pharmasave, Barrie Fire Fighters, the Royal Canadian Legion and Barrie Hill Farms, just to name a few.

I'd like to take this time to recognize all of the sponsors and volunteers that help support the tournament and make it possible. They run this tournament so that children who need it can feel special too on that first day back to school.

INTERNATIONAL PLOWING MATCH

Mr. Grant Crack: What a pleasure it is to rise here today and thank the united counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, the local mayors, the councillors and the numerous volunteers who, together, organized an incredible successful event: the 2015 edition of the International Plowing Match and Rural Expo in Finch, Ontario, which is, by the way, only about 30 minutes from my home, so that was quite convenient for me.

To see Ontario's agricultural community come together and showcase their important contribution to Ontario's economy is nothing short of spectacular.

Agricultural practices have greatly evolved over the years since the first plowing match in 1913, and our farmers are second to none here in Ontario. They run efficient agriculture and agriculture-related businesses that contribute approximately \$34 billion to the provincial economy and employ almost 800,000 Ontarians.

From a political perspective, it's an opportunity for all of us members of the Legislature to visit different parts of rural Ontario each year to see, specifically this year, how beautiful eastern Ontario really is and what beautiful landscape that I get to enjoy every time I go and do my work in my riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

Not only did the united counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry showcase all of the great things on offer in their region, but also the united counties of Prescott—Russell in my riding had wonderful tents that were full of information about local municipalities and what they all offer to the people and visitors.

Congratulations to former MPP Jim Brownell, who was chair of this year's edition of the international plowing match, and to his incredible team of volunteers for their years of work in ensuring the success of this event and providing everyone with an enjoyable experience. Congratulations; great job.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I know this is not a point of order, but I just want to very quickly introduce a good friend of mine that I notice in the gallery: Dr. Fahim Ali, who is the father of Page Nuh. Fahim and I went to university together. It is great to see him here and see Nuh in the Legislature. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is correct; it's not a point of order. Welcome.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MENTAL HEALTH STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT DES LOIS RELATIVES À LA SANTÉ MENTALE

Mr. Hoskins moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 122, An Act to amend the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 122, Loi visant à modifier la Loi sur la santé mentale et la Loi de 1996 sur le consentement aux soins de santé.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister for a short statement.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The Mental Health Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015, would, if passed, make amendments to the Mental Health Act in response to the Ontario Court of Appeal decision in P.S. v. Ontario, 2014. The bill would create additional rights for patients through enhanced powers for the Consent and Capacity Board.

PETITIONS

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: It's a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the" rightful "purpose of Ontario's Environmental Protection Act ... is to 'provide for the protection and conservation of the natural environment'; and
1520

"Whereas 'all landfills will eventually release leachate to the surrounding environment and therefore all landfills will have some impact on the water quality of the local ecosystem.'—Threats to Sources of Drinking Water and Aquatic Health in Canada;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That section 27 of the EPA should be reviewed and amended immediately to prohibit the establishment of new or expanded landfills at fractured bedrock sites and other hydrogeologically unsuitable locations within the province of Ontario."

I affix my signature as I support this petition.

ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have a petition that I believe originated with the AIDS Committee of Windsor.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas naloxone is a medication that can reverse the symptoms of an opioid overdose; and

"Whereas the provincial Expert Working Group on Narcotic Addiction (EWGNA) has recommended that the ministry 'increase and sustain the availability of naloxone overdose prevention kits and harm reduction information via public health units across the province';

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Instruct the Ontario government to expand the naloxone distribution program, which restricts the dispensing of naloxone to individuals who are current needle exchange program clients or patients in the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care hepatitis C treatment and outreach program, to include:

"—not-for-profit agencies and organizations that service individuals at risk of opioid overdose;

"—individuals that support and/or care for individuals at risk of opioid overdose; and

"—any individual living in Ontario that is 16 years of age and older and dependent on opioids."

I agree with this petition. I will affix my name and give it to Jaleelah to present to the table.

CONCUSSION

Mr. Todd Smith: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the rate of concussions among children and youth has increased significantly from 2003 to 2011, from 466 to 754 per 100,000 for boys, and from 208 to 440 per 100,000 for girls; and

"Whereas hard falls and the use of force, often found in full-contact sports, have been found to be the cause of over half of all hospital visits for pediatric concussions; and

"Whereas the signs and the symptoms of concussions can be difficult to identify unless coaches, mentors, youth and parents have been educated to recognize them; and

"Whereas preventative measures, such as rules around return-to-play for young athletes who have suspected concussions, as well as preventative education and awareness, have been found to significantly decrease the danger of serious or fatal injuries; and

"Whereas Bill 39, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to concussions, was introduced in 2012 but never passed; and

"Whereas 49 recommendations to increase awareness, training and education around concussions were made by a jury after the coroner's inquest into the concussion death of Rowan Stringer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario government review and adopt Rowan's Law to ensure the safety and health of children and youth athletes across the province."

As a father of two young girls who are very active in competitive sports, I agree with this, will sign it and send it to the table with page Kelly.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Privatizing Hydro One: Another Wrong Choice.

"Whereas once you privatize Hydro One, there's no return; and

"We will lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

"We will lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

"We will pay higher and higher hydro bills, just like what's happened elsewhere;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come."

I sign this petition and give it to page Eastyn to deliver.

LUNG HEALTH

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children. Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

"In the Ontario Lung Association report Your Lungs, Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry's private member's bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung

Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

“Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage.”

I agree with this petition. I'll affix my name and give it to page David to take to the Clerk.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the \$100 ODSP Work-Related Benefit provides a critically important source of funds to people with disabilities on ODSP who work, giving them the ability to pay for much-needed, ongoing work-related expenses such as transportation, clothing, food, personal care and hygiene items, and child care; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Community and Social Services plans to eliminate the Work-Related Benefit as part of a restructuring of OW and ODSP employment benefits, and has said that ongoing work-related expenses will not be covered by its new restructured Employment-Related Benefit; and

“Whereas eliminating the Work-Related Benefit will take approximately \$36 million annually out of the pockets of people with disabilities on ODSP who work; and

“Whereas a survey conducted by the ODSP Action Coalition between December 2014 and February 2015 shows that 18% of respondents who currently receive the Work-Related Benefit fear having to quit their jobs as a result of the loss of this important source of funds; 12.5% fear having to reduce the amount of money they spend on food, or rely on food banks; and 10% fear losing the ability to travel, due to the cost of transportation; and

“Whereas people receiving ODSP already struggle to get by, and incomes on ODSP provide them with little or no ability to cover these costs from regular benefits; and

“Whereas undermining employment among ODSP recipients would run directly counter to the ministry's goal of increasing employment and the provincial government's poverty reduction goal of increasing income security;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the provincial government's plan to eliminate the ODSP Work-Related Benefit.”

I affix my name to this and send it down to the table with Sydney.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Wayne Gates: To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Privatizing Hydro One: Another Wrong Choice.

“Whereas once you privatize hydro, there's no return; and

“We'll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

“We'll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

“We'll pay higher and higher hydro bills, just like what's happened elsewhere;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come.”

I sign my petition.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are critical transportation infrastructure needs for the province;

“Whereas giving people multiple avenues for their transportation needs takes cars off the road;

“Whereas public transit increases the quality of life for Ontarians and helps the environment;

“Whereas the constituents of Orléans and east Ottawa are in need of greater transportation infrastructure;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Support the Moving Ontario Forward plan and the Ottawa LRT phase II construction, which will help address the critical transportation infrastructure needs of Orléans, east Ottawa and the province of Ontario.”

It gives me great pleasure to add my signature, and I will give it to page Jacob.

1530

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's lack of leadership is forcing the closure of the South Bruce Grey Health Centre restorative care Chesley site; and

“Whereas it is ignoring evidence that the restorative care program has had major successes since its inception three years ago; and

“Whereas it has helped over 300 patients to increase their quality of life by helping them regain strength, balance and independence; and

“Whereas it has improved patient outcomes for over 80% of patients who returned home feeling confident of their recovery; and

“Whereas the loss of this critical care will see patients readmitted to hospitals, to emergency room visits or having to stay in acute care beds longer, representing the costliest options in our health care system; and

"Whereas vulnerable seniors in our communities take the position that there is evidence of funding cuts for home care services; and

"Whereas our senior and all other vulnerable patients deserve access to compassionate care and treatment as close to home as possible;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To provide the necessary base funding to keep the South Bruce Grey Health Centre restorative care Chesley site in operation so that the health and welfare of our most vulnerable patients remains intact."

I fully support it and will give it to page Laura.

TAXATION

Mr. Rick Nicholls: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Liberal government has indicated they plan on introducing a new carbon tax in 2015; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers have already been burdened with a health tax of \$300 to \$900 per person that doesn't necessarily go into health care, a \$2-billion smart meter program that failed to conserve energy, and households are paying almost \$700 more annually for unaffordable subsidies under the Green Energy Act; and

"Whereas a carbon tax scheme would increase the cost of everyday goods including gasoline and home heating; and

"Whereas the government continues to run unaffordable deficits without a plan to reduce spending while collecting \$30 billion more annually in tax revenues than 11 years ago; and

"Whereas the aforementioned points lead to the conclusion that the government is seeking justification to raise taxes to pay for their excessive spending, without accomplishing any concrete targets;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To abandon the idea of introducing yet another unaffordable and ineffective tax on Ontario families and businesses."

I approve of this petition, and I will give it to page Siena.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Mr. Todd Smith: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government's proposed Ontario Retirement Pension Plan (ORPP) is a mandatory pension plan which would target small businesses and their employees; and

"Whereas there has been little to no discussion on what the costs would be, or who would pay them; and

"Whereas affected businesses would be hit with up to \$1,643 per employee, per year in new payroll taxes starting in 2017; and

"Whereas affected employees would have up to \$1,643 per year extra deducted from their paycheques, and it would take 40 years for them to see the full pension benefits; and

"Whereas the Canadian Federation of Independent Business predicts the unemployment rate in Ontario would rise by 0.5%, and there would be a reduction in wages over the longer term; and

"Whereas all of these costs would be shouldered exclusively by small businesses and their employees; and

"Whereas public sector and big business employees who already have a pension plan will not be asked to pay into the plan;

"We, the undersigned, do not support implementation of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan and petition the government of Ontario to axe the pension tax."

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Green Energy Act has driven up the cost of electricity in Ontario due to unrealistic subsidies for certain energy sources, including the world's highest subsidies for solar power; and

"Whereas this cost is passed on to ratepayers through the global adjustment, which can account for almost half of a ratepayer's hydro bill; and

"Whereas the high cost of energy is severely impacting the quality of life of Ontario's residents, especially fixed-income seniors; and

"Whereas it is imperative to remedy Liberal mismanagement in the energy sector by implementing immediate reforms detailed in the Ontario PC white paper *Paths to Prosperity—Affordable Energy*;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately repeal the Green Energy Act, 2009, and all other statutes that artificially inflate the cost of electricity with the aim of bringing down electricity rates and abolishing expensive surcharges such as the global adjustment and debt retirement charges."

I fully support it, will affix my name and send it with page Kelly.

LUNG HEALTH

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Kitchener–Waterloo has a petition.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Oh, you're going to let me go? Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, this is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children. Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

"In the Ontario Lung Association report *Your Lungs, Your Life*, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry's private member's bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

"Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage."

I will put my name to this and hand it to our page, Alexander.

VISITORS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound has a point of order.

Mr. Bill Walker: I would like to welcome Don McCulloch to the Legislature. He has joined two other fine gentlemen from Bruce county. He's a physician who provides exemplary service, but equally important to that is his nephew Brett "Gracie the Goalie" McCulloch. He's one of my son Zach's best friends. I'd like to welcome you and thank you for your dedicated and compassionate service to the people of Ontario.

OPPOSITION DAY

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

PRIVATISATION DES BIENS PUBLICS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I move that:

Whereas the government of Ontario has eliminated public oversight of Hydro One by revoking the powers of the following independent non-partisan officers of the Legislative Assembly: the Auditor General, Ombudsman, Information and Privacy Commissioner, Integrity Commissioner, French Language Services Commissioner, Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, Environmental Commissioner and Financial Accountability Officer; and

Whereas the government of Ontario has denied all freedom-of-information requests related to the privatization of Hydro One, including all records of the costs and risks related to the sale; and

Whereas more than 80% of Ontarians oppose the government's plan to privatize Hydro One; and

Whereas the government of Ontario refused to hold public consultations on the privatization of Hydro One across the province before moving ahead with the 2015 Ontario budget; and

Whereas Ontarians have a right to accurate information, non-partisan analysis and to be heard before the sale of Hydro One begins;

Therefore, it is in the opinion of this House that the Minister of Energy immediately invoke section 35 of the Ontario Energy Board Act and order the Ontario Energy Board to conduct an independent, public, non-partisan review of the impact of the proposed privatization of Hydro One prior to launching any sale of shares or stock.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 1. I recognize the leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm very pleased and proud to be able to rise today on behalf of Ontario's New Democratic Party caucus to speak to our opposition day motion.

Many people will know that over this past summer, I travelled through the province, talking to people, listening to people, more importantly, about what they had to say, and I heard them loudly and clearly. People's concerns about the sell-off of Hydro One were top of mind everywhere that I went. Too many families are struggling right now to pay the bills, and families are worried. They're worried about how the sell-off of Hydro One is going to make their situation even worse, how the sell-off of Hydro One is going to hurt, particularly in the pocketbook.

1540

Businesses also told me that they're very, very concerned that higher rates are going to cut into their margins and force them to cut jobs. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce has been very vocal about the need to address sky-high Liberal hydro rates for the sake of our economy. I've heard directly from small businesses, from Timmins to Sarnia, who have told me that they are very concerned about the challenges they face every day to keep their livelihoods, pay their hydro bills and keep staff on.

We know from this government's own polling that three out of four Ontarians—the vast majority of Ontarians—want hydro kept public. Other public domain polls in fact have shown even stronger opposition to the sell-off of Hydro One. But you don't need polling to tell you this, Speaker. All you have to do is walk down any street in any community, in any city, in any small town, in any hamlet in this province and you'll hear it from people each and every time: They do not want their Hydro One sold off.

Ontarians are very, very worried about this. They're extremely worried about this, and they are frustrated that their Premier simply is not listening. She's ignoring them. She's treating them with the utmost of disrespect. She's being arrogant, and she's being ignorant to the concerns that Ontarians have, and that is not what a Premier should be doing. What's most appalling is that

the Premier is going to go ahead with this sale with no public consultation whatsoever, with absolutely zero—none, nada—independent analysis of the basis of this decision, none whatsoever, and no mandate from the people of Ontario.

How dare this government take this move with no independent analysis whatsoever? It's unbelievable that the government would be dragged by the nose through this process by their friends on Bay Street. Well, maybe it's not so unbelievable, because that's what the Liberal do each and every time. They look after their own friends and not the people of Ontario.

So here we have a situation where, once again, the Liberals are turning their backs on the people and the businesses of this province. They're choosing to cater to a small group of powerful friends and Liberal insiders. All you have to do is look at the money being paid to the executive and the board members, the overwhelming number of which are in the corporate who's who in the province of Ontario. Have a look. Check out the board. Look at all of those companies that are going to be making all kinds of money in fees on the sale of Hydro One. It's in the prospectus. It's the who's who of all of the top bankers who have been advising this government for the last couple of years. It's the who's who of all the movers and shakers who have become the Liberals' best friends over a decade in government.

It's a disgrace. They're going to be making millions upon millions of dollars on the backs of ratepayers. It's no wonder that the ratepayers of this province, businesses and families alike, are worried, are scared, because this is one of the biggest mistakes that this province will have made in recent memory—in generations, Speaker.

The Premier is refusing to live up to her promises to Ontarians, and that is absolutely the case. She came in here riding a white horse. She was going to do things differently. She was going to listen to people. She was going to be transparent. She was going to be accountable. None of those things is happening in this most important situation right here, the sell-off of Hydro One—none of those things.

When she put that Ed Clark panel together, she promised that any decisions by that panel—so this is over and above her unanimous declarations being the new Premier of this province; over and above that. When she put that Ed Clark panel together specifically to look at Ontario's assets, what she said was that any decisions by that panel would be “transparent, professional and independently validated.” None of those things have happened, and it's high time those things do happen, before it's too late, before this government once again buys a pig in a poke that the people of Ontario will pay for for generations to come. That's exactly what we need, Speaker. We need what the Premier has refused to do. But I can say that she has an actual chance to change that. She could actually change that. She can stop the secrecy of this sell-off and order an open and transparent review by the Ontario Energy Board.

You know what, Speaker? The Ontario Energy Board actually has a mandate under law to protect the interests

of consumers with respect to prices and the adequacy, reliability and quality of electricity service. Now, some of us may quibble as to whether in fact they've actually taken on that role in a serious way, whether they've been a toothless tiger when it comes to being careful about the rates here in Ontario, but that doesn't mean that they don't have other roles that they can fulfill in regard to this particular initiative that the Liberals have put together.

It's hard to imagine that anything would have a greater impact on electricity service than the privatization of Hydro One. I don't think there's anything that would have more of an impact than this very item that the Liberals are bent on implementing. With the recently released prospectus confirming that the government will not in fact retain control—de facto control or otherwise—an independent review is more important than ever.

The government has the authority. They have the authority to direct, to require, the Ontario Energy Board, the OEB, to examine any question whatsoever on energy. The OEB can deliver exactly the kind of broad and transparent public hearings that this government refused to do during the process of the budget, that they refused to do during the process of implementation of this policy. They could get the OEB to do that. That's the least that Ontarians deserve. The least that Ontarians deserve is public hearings into the sell-off of Hydro One, and the OEB can make that happen.

The Liberals have used their authority before with the OEB. This isn't new; this isn't something that's being pulled out of a hat somewhere. In fact, very recently, this very minister, the Minister of Energy, Minister Chiarelli, called on the OEB to do exactly that, to do particular work on behalf of the government. In 2013, he asked the OEB to examine the merits of the Energy East Pipeline, figuring it might have an impact on energy in this province. In 2014, Minister Chiarelli directed the OEB to explore a rate program for low-income ratepayers, for low-income consumers. That makes sense; it has an impact on energy.

The sell-off of Hydro One will have a greater impact than either of those two initiatives. The sell-off of Hydro One will have a more significant impact on energy than any other policy that this government could dream up or has dreamed up in their 12 years in office. It is absolutely necessary that the minister responsible for this file direct the OEB to put together public hearings and to do an independent, unbiased, non-partisan analysis of the Liberal plan.

The Premier needs to do that. She needs to make that clear, that that's what needs to happen. Ontario families and businesses deserve a chance to know how badly this deal is going to hurt their bottom lines, how badly it's going to hurt their pocketbooks.

New Democrats have been listening to Ontarians, and we have been proposing reasonable solutions to allow Ontarians to be heard, to give them the transparency that they so deserve and to protect their bottom lines against

further Liberal rate hikes. Today I'm asking the government to actually step up and direct the OEB to review the sell-off of Hydro One. It's time to open up the Liberal backroom doors and bring some transparency and some public scrutiny to this privatization scheme.

This morning, I've written to the Premier, and I asked her government to direct the OEB to complete a public review of the sale of hydro before we take another step down this path. I sent the letter off this morning, and I think the Premier needs to actually pay attention this time. This has gone far too long. It is unacceptable that we are in the situation that we're in now.

On Friday, the preliminary prospectus was released. Nobody knew anything about it until it hit the Ontario Securities Commission. Nobody knew anything about it. Nobody knew that the Liberals were planning to increase the money that gets paid to the top executive fivefold, that the board of directors were going to get a huge raise in terms of what they're being paid. Nowhere in the preliminary remarks in that prospectus did I see anything about consumers, anything about rates, anything about ratepayers. It was all about what's good for the corporation. When you have a public electricity system, it's about what's good for the public, not what's good for the return on investment for shareholders.

1550

So we need to have that public review; we need the Ontario Energy Board to do it. The people of Ontario deserve to have their concerns listened to. The work that's done by the OEB needs to be released for public review before the sale goes any further. That's the kind of open, public, transparent and professional review that the people of this province deserve.

You know, Ontarians are very tired of Liberal broken promises. The Premier promised to be transparent; she promised a professional, transparent and independently validated process. Well, I think it's about time that she kept that promise. I think it's about time she finally did the right thing by the people of Ontario. Listen to their voices, give them a chance to be heard, and then actually act on what she hears. I can guarantee you that she's going to hear that people do not want Hydro One sold off. I think that's what she's the most afraid of. Shame on her for not doing her job as a Premier of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Today a little ground fog added 30 minutes to the commute of western GTA drivers. It now takes 50% longer to get from Mississauga to downtown than it did when I was first elected 12 years ago. That's why, last year, in 2014, our government convened a group of experts to look at how Ontario will build and pay for the infrastructure we need to get around, to move people, to move freight and to build our economy.

Visitors to Asia and Europe see how nations, regions and cities work together to get people out of their cars, to cut carbon emissions, to reduce urban sprawl and to reduce commute times. We can do that here too, now that the greater Toronto area has surpassed Chicago and is

now the third densest metropolitan area of North America, behind only New York and Los Angeles.

It's important to begin my response to the leader of the third party in this way, because being able to pay our infrastructure bills is as important as knowing what to build and getting the projects done on time and on budget.

How do the two opposition parties regard the daily commute in our large cities and the infrastructure needs in our smaller cities and urban areas? How they regard them says as much about the parties as it does about the problem. The Tories' approach has always been to just do nothing. Stuck in traffic? You're on your own. Indeed, on matters that relate to electricity and natural gas, the NDP's approach is similar. The NDP simply oppose every plan to generate or transmit electricity.

Left to their own flawed policies, both the Conservatives and the NDP would continue to do as they have always done: Run our electricity generation and transmission systems into the ground, and do nothing. By the way, that is also how the NDP and the Conservatives propose to keep bills to consumers from rising.

Doing nothing is not acceptable to Ontarians. We've seen it before on the watches of both Conservative and NDP governments. Ratepayers today don't need to worry about crumbling infrastructure or crumbling electricity generation and transmission in Ontario. They did 12 years ago.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Maybe a little quiet from the third party area? They were kind enough to be quiet while you delivered your speech.

Go ahead.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you, Speaker.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Oshawa would like to share something with us?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: No, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Continue.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Ratepayers today don't need to worry about crumbling electricity generation and transmission in Ontario. They did up to 12 years ago, when Ontario was a net buyer of electricity at upwards of a dollar per kilowatt hour, when brownouts had started in Ontario in the fading days of the last Conservative government here at Queen's Park, and when diesel generators were on standby in case our electricity grid collapsed entirely. Indeed, on their watch, the Conservatives added \$1 billion in purchased electricity to our stranded debt.

To grasp where this province is going, you have to first understand where we've come from. Our grid is up to date and getting better every year. Ontario has strung more than 5,000 kilometres of new wire to bring electricity to homes, cities, towns and industries. And here's an important part: Ontario electricity is now clean. Our electricity is now more than 99.5% carbon-free, and we're still out to get that last fraction of 1%. Our urban

airsheds are cleaner. Smog days are rare; they're few and far between, and fewer kids need puffers in our schools.

Ontario is now a net electricity exporter, earning about half a billion dollars per year from sales of Ontario electricity to other jurisdictions, including Quebec, which cannot meet its peak mid-winter demand and buys Ontario electricity to keep the lights on in Montreal. We've achieved that, as Ontarians, with money already spent, borrowed when interest rates were at historic lows. That's what your electricity bills have bought in recent years.

In the years to come, we need to bring down our Ontario carbon footprint in the area that now emits more greenhouse gases than any other: transportation. Whether it's the expansion of the Milton line GO rail corridor that we so much need in Mississauga, or the light rail lines to link the two dozen fast-growing cities that comprise the GTA, or the bridges and power corridors they need in the north, our government does not see doing nothing as an option.

So what are the other options that the province and our cities have, to pay for building new and better ways to get around in Ontario, and to keep our electricity generation and transmission systems modern and responsive?

Some advocate tolling our roads, or even further raising transit fares. The NDP seems to feel that jacking up corporate tax rates is the one-stop panacea to Ontario's problems. Would they also raise sales taxes? Well, they have everywhere else they've formed government. Should you just keep right on borrowing it all? Should Ontario disassemble the health care and education systems, where two thirds of our province's money is spent, to pay for better transit and infrastructure? Or should Ontario acquire more public assets by sharing the ownership of some of the assets that Ontario already owns?

Let's look at these options in a little bit more detail.

Most people I speak with in Mississauga say they'll talk toll roads when they can see and ride on the transit that the tolls some people advocate proposing to build are in place. Transit prices are subsidized everywhere in the world. Ontario's transit subsidies are already among the world's lowest. We don't need higher fares; we need more riders. And we don't need more cars to clog our highways.

While tax rates, like prices, will change all the time, Ontario has found a sweet spot in North America. Ontario is the most competitive jurisdiction in North America for its low tax burden on individuals and businesses. But the NDP say to just raise taxes. Ontario residents feel that the NDP's solution means chasing away the geese that lay the golden eggs of jobs, investment and prosperity. The NDP say that governments who aren't squeezing the lifeblood of cash out of investors and businesses are just pandering to the wealthy. They miss the point. Our tax load must be a broadly shared one within Ontario's huge middle class. The prevailing wisdom and consensus is that Ontario's business, income and consumption taxes are just about where they should be right now.

The NDP also advocate just continuing to borrow. Let's be clear: Ontario borrowed a lot of money to get through the recent recession. There was a choice. The province could have gone the neo-con Tea Party route that they did in Ottawa. They could have choked the air out of our recovery. The United States did that, and like US—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Do I have to say anything?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm sorry. No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thanks. Go ahead.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you, Speaker. There was a choice to borrowing money. We could have gone the neo-con Tea Party route that prevails in Ottawa. We could have choked the air out of our recovery here in Ontario. The United States did that. Like US states, we too could have fired teachers, police officers, nurses, health care workers, and slashed programs and supports to the very people losing their livelihoods. I have no doubt that bond rating agencies would have been happier and Ontario's debt-to-GDP ratio would have been a little bit lower.

The jury is now in on Tea Party-style austerity. It has never worked anywhere in the world any time it has been tried. It failed in the United States, which took more than three full years longer than Ontario to recover its lost jobs and get back to where it was in the middle of 2008.

The cost of Ontario's quick economic recovery is that, also, there's a limit to how healthy an amount we should borrow. Our government has never missed a deficit reduction target. We remain on track for a balanced budget in 2017-18.

Borrowing it all to build transit and infrastructure is not how Ontario should go forward; neither is cannibalizing public health care or primary, secondary and post-secondary; neither is cannibalizing highways and assistance to cities; neither is cannibalizing and taking apart policing and the administration of justice, or support for our needy, and so on. We ask ourselves if we can find a way to unlock some cash in what we already own, while keeping control of assets that deliver a public good, such as electricity.

Ontario pension funds note that there are not many public assets into which Ontario workers can invest their money in their own province. Is it a problem if Ontarians, in their RRSPs, their pension funds or their investment accounts, own part of their own public assets? A panel chaired by former TD chief economist Ed Clark concluded that Ontario could share ownership of some public assets and free up money to build even more public assets.

Twice in the past generation, sharing ownership of the towers, wires, substations and some of the local distribution of Ontario electric power has been proposed. People are reluctant, after the complete failure of the privatization of the publicly funded and privately built Highway 407, to consider something that might be

similar. I completely get that. Highway 407 was the single worst, most one-sided and unfair privatization scheme in world history, undertaken by the Conservatives in the 1990s. That's why it was so important that Ontario learn from that boondoggle and get it right, and make it fair and make it workable.

After all, our railways—one of which was formerly owned by the federal government and the other built with taxpayer funds—are now both private entities. I must admit I wish I had bought CN Rail at its initial public offering. Railways are now publicly owned but regulated by the government at the federal level. So are our banks publicly owned, and they are government regulated as well. That firm hand of regulatory accountability was what kept Canadian banks and financial institutions solvent when so many others around the world either failed or converted their corporate cash shortfalls into taxpayer debt in other countries.

We've done this before in Canada. And in Hydro One's new CEO, a gentleman I have not yet met, Mayo Schmidt, Ontarians have a seasoned executive who took the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool and made it into a well-run, profitable and successful business called Viterra. He built it into a publicly held, multi-billion-dollar corporation with nearly 7,000 employees and opened up operations around the world. I used to get into Saskatchewan regularly on business years ago. Saskatchewan residents are plain-spoken, level-headed and pragmatic business people. While everyone had a pet peeve about the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, they would not have parted with it if it had cost them control and accountability over the collection, storage, marketing and distribution of their province's signature agricultural crop: wheat.

Ontario will do the same with Hydro One. The province has veto power over the CEO. If the board goes rogue or loses touch with those they are appointed to serve, the province can remove the entire board. Ontario will, after multiple issues of Hydro One shares, retain a strong, controlling ownership position in the company.

Just to give Ontarians an idea of what a controlling interest in a publicly traded stock means, I looked up a recent article in a US legal newsletter called Law360 on shareholder control. It stated, and I quote exactly:

"The definition of controlling party always has been something of a moving target, said Bernard Black, a finance and law professor at Northwestern University.

"Back in 1988, the Chancery Court held that a 39% stake in Macmillan Inc. was enough to give a hostile buyer effective control. Seven years later, in a heavily litigated battle for Unitrin Inc., the court said 28% was not. So when it comes to stock ownership, somewhere between 28% and 39% is a fuzzy line that denotes control, moving with the facts specific to each case, Black said."

Ontario will retain not 28% to 39%, but 40% ownership of Hydro One: yet another indication that Hydro One will remain controlled by Ontarians. Hydro One's headquarters must always remain in Ontario.

People worry about whether a privately held Hydro One could just raise prices at will. They cannot. Hydro

One does not set electricity prices any more than Enbridge or Union Gas set natural gas prices. Those decisions rest with the Ontario Energy Board, an independent, regulatory body. The OEB often overturns rate change applications. Regardless of what Hydro One's shareholders or management may wish for, the decision will always rest with the independent Ontario Energy Board.

To this end, in 2010, Hydro One asked for a distribution rate increase and received, instead of a rate increase, a 9% reduction in its capital request. In 2011, OPG, Ontario Power Generation, applied for a 6.2% rate increase. The OEB denied the request and lowered rates. In 2012, Hydro One asked for a rate increase for transmission and received a 3% reduction for its capital request. In 2012, Toronto Hydro made a distribution request and received 10.8% less than requested. In 2014, Ontario Power Generation asked for a rate increase and the Ontario Energy Board approved about half of the amount requested. Over the last six months, the Ontario Energy Board has also decreased natural gas rates for Enbridge and Union Gas customers.

As I saw in a recent visit to the headquarters of the Independent Electricity System Operator, or IESO, Hydro One does not even control how much electricity flows through its wires, or even the direction that it flows. They do that in the control room at IESO, which is independent of Hydro One.

Hydro One will be subject to the exact same disclosure, transparency and audit rules, through the Ontario Securities Commission, that govern all other publicly traded companies, including our banks.

Do you want to find out who the senior management team members are and how much they'll be paid? You can find that on page 141 of the Hydro One preliminary prospectus, and you'll find it in the quarterly reports that the company will issue in the years to come. Hydro One's audited financial statements and quarterly reports will be publicly available; indeed, it may come to pass that many Ontarians could choose to have some Hydro One shares in their pension plan, in their RRSP or in their investment account, and they too will receive some reports on how well their company is performing.

Even at the institutional level, no one investor will be able to accumulate more than 10% of Hydro One's outstanding shares. And the Ontario Securities Commission takes this type of limitation very seriously, and has measures with teeth. In practical terms, it would take a complex and risky undertaking involving the acquisition of the large majority of all the outstanding shares to even try a hostile takeover that the terms of the Hydro One structure would ensure fails.

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Ontario-wide, Hydro One Networks Inc. serves about 1.2 million customers. Let's put that another way: That's only 24% of the total customers in Ontario. With such a minority position, Hydro One must remain competitive with existing private sector, privately owned, local distribution companies such as Toronto Hydro, PowerStream,

Hydro Ottawa, Horizon Utilities, Enersource, London Hydro and dozens of others.

All of these points are acknowledged in the Hydro One preliminary prospectus.

Speaker, we in Ontario need to get on with the transit and infrastructure that this province needs, now and during the 21st century. Public control of Hydro One remains. The government campaigned on a mandate to find some value in Hydro One and to use exactly this value to build better transit to help all of us get along.

Future prices of electricity may reflect the cost of building lines, renewing substations and improving service, and a lot of that improvement has already been bought, paid for and implemented.

Speaker, this opposition motion is without merit or basis. It should be defeated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to join the debate here and bring a little realism back to the discussion of the day, because that was like getting a report from another planet, and I'm not exactly sure—the member from the government side means well. I'm sure he was sent out there to read those remarks. He's a good guy. I play hockey with him on the Ontario Legiskaters. For a while there, he needed his goalie equipment because there were some barbs headed his way. There were just so many inaccuracies in what he said. About this deal—and he didn't speak much about the deal—he talked about the fact that Ontario is a competitive jurisdiction, which is absolutely ridiculous. Ontario is probably one of the least attractive jurisdictions right now in North America.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): There seem to be about seven or eight independent discussions going on, and it seems to be coming mostly from the third party. If you want to have your group discussions, take it outside, because I'm having trouble hearing—and he has a very deep voice. I'm getting muffling sounds in the back, so take it outside, please.

Go ahead.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Speaker. You have a lovely voice as well.

This is a serious, serious topic. From what we just heard from the member on the government side, it's almost like he has no idea of what public perception of this deal is and how opposed the public is to the fire sale of Hydro One.

I commend the leader of the third party for her opposition day motion today. It's well worded, it makes a lot of sense, and I think it points out a lot of the things that this Liberal government said prior to the election, and the difference between what was said prior to the election and what is actually happening now in Ontario.

This Premier promised to be transparent. And what was the first thing she did? She decided she's going to sell off Hydro One, one of our most valuable assets, if not the most valuable asset, which returns \$780 million every year to Ontario. She announced she's going to sell

it off, but she's done it in a backroom somewhere. And not only that, she announced it at a public media event, with a big sign up on the wall that said, "Beer in grocery stores." That's all it said. It didn't say anything about the Hydro One sale. You had to look at the footnotes to find out that Hydro was actually being sold off as well. She uses beer as a distraction for the media and the public any opportunity she can. She did it today, when the Auditor General was releasing her report on the CCACs and the fact that \$4 out of every \$10 being spent in the CCACs is going to administration. She thought she could distract by announcing she was going to start selling six-packs at a couple of grocery stores across Ontario.

This has been smoke and mirrors from the start, and it's time we started to get some honesty from the Premier and rewinding, as the NDP has said in their opposition day motion, of the lack of oversight on this entire deal. All of the oversight has been removed. It's up to the NDP and it's up to the official opposition now, and perhaps the media, to keep tabs on what actually is happening with the sell-off of Hydro One to ensure that we're getting the value for that asset that we should be getting. Assets at Hydro One are valued at \$22 billion. She says she's going to sell off 60% of Hydro One. She's going to get \$9 billion. I think—I don't know—60% of \$22 billion is not \$9 billion; it's more like \$11 billion or \$12 billion.

She says she's going to pay \$5 billion onto the debt that exists there and then have \$4 billion left over. However, that's not the end of the story. She's not going to net nearly that much in the sale for her infrastructure projects. But the thing is that even if she did that, she's only going to be able to do it once, and then it's gone. The revenue stream that exists is gone. She's not going to be able to sell it every time she needs to get her hands on some cash.

That's really what this whole debate comes down to. It's a desperate, desperate move by a government that hasn't been able to control its finances for years, running deficits of \$11 billion, \$12 billion. She can't borrow any more money. The debt in Ontario is approaching \$300 billion. It has doubled under these guys. The well has run dry for them, so they have to start selling off our most important public assets, like Hydro One.

Mr. Bill Walker: Fire sale.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a fire sale. You've heard Patrick Brown, our new leader, talk about it. It is a fire sale, and we in the PC caucus are vehemently and vociferously opposed to the sale of Hydro One.

Do you know what? In preparing for this address to the House, I went looking for the Conservative case against privatization, because the one thing that does keep getting thrown around in this debate is how Tories can be opposed to privatization. I figured that some Tory, of the many thousands who have graced Parliaments around the world, would have made the case against it, and they have.

I stumbled onto this quote by former British Conservative Prime Minister Harold Macmillan:

"It is very common for individuals or states, when they run into financial difficulties, to find that they have

to sell some of their assets. First the Georgian silver goes; then all that nice furniture that used to be in the salon; then the Canaletto's go.

"Then the most tasty morsel, the most productive of all: having got rid of cables and wireless, having got rid of the only part of the railways that paid and having got rid of the part of steel pits that paid and having sold this and that, we are promised in the King's speech the further sale of anything that can be scraped up."

That's what we're doing here, Mr. Speaker. That's what the Premier of Ontario is doing. She's scraping, she's scrounging, she's just trying to get her hands on any money that she can, because she's addicted to spending and has no control. That's why she is selling Hydro One.

You know, there are natural monopolies in this country. We have certain geographic and economic realities in this country that don't exist in other places with a privatized grid. Hydro One is the single largest transmitter and distributor in the province in terms of the amount of infrastructure that it's responsible for. More than 90% of transmission and distribution infrastructure in the province of Ontario is in the hands of Hydro One. That statistic, by the way, is according to the prospectus that the government released last week. That's because Hydro One is responsible for the vast majority of low-density areas in this province. This is a key point in the sell-off of Hydro One, especially for me, in a mostly rural riding in Prince Edward-Hastings. There are a lot of low-density customers in those areas. Did you know that Ontario has 14.7 people per square kilometre? Think about that: 14.7 people per square kilometre in Ontario. When you remove just the province's second-largest utility, Toronto Hydro, from the mix, that goes down to 10.1 people per square kilometre in Ontario. This is going to drive up hydro rates in those rural areas of the province.

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Mr. Bill Walker: Which are already the highest.

Mr. Todd Smith: Which are already the highest, as my friend from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound points out.

Then you remove Ottawa Hydro, Hamilton-Wentworth, Kitchener-Wilmot, London, Windsor and other areas from the mix, and you watch that number get smaller and smaller. It is important, because a part of this fire sale of Hydro One is the removal of what Prime Minister Macmillan called the "tasty morsels" of the Hydro One grid. He called them the "tasty morsels"; I'm calling them the "tasty morsels" of the Hydro One grid. It's the high-density parts that are more cost-effective to operate and end up paying for the low-density parts in the province.

The government has already started removing these high-density customers from the Hydro One mix by removing Hydro One Brampton. Electricity distributors all over the province will be wanting to get into the act, removing the high-density, profit-returning parts of Hydro One and leaving the company with the low-density, expensive-to-service customers in the rural parts of Ontario. You break off the Thurlow suburbs from

Hydro One and you add them to Veridian in Belleville, you break off suburban Ottawa customers and add them to Ottawa Hydro, and the follow-up question is, why does it matter if Hydro One, as we know it, becomes an electricity distribution service that services predominantly rural and northern Ontario? The answer is the cost. It all comes down to the cost to those people. When you remove the parts of Hydro One that make money from the ratepayer base of the company, you're left with fewer customers, who are predominantly living in locations that are harder to service.

The Ontario Energy Board sets rates almost entirely based on the costs of delivering service to customers, and I think that's an important thing for the government to recognize. The member from the government stood up just a minute ago, and the Minister of Energy said it this morning, and the Premier said it as well: The OEB is in control of hydro rates. No, they're not, Mr. Speaker. They rubber-stamp those hydro rate increases. We know that it's going to cost more for what is left of Hydro One to provide that electricity to those customers in vast Ontario, and they're going to have to rubber-stamp those.

The other thing is that the OEB—sure, they're the ones that approve those hydro rate increases. The Ontario Securities Commission is going to play a major role in the sell-off of Hydro One because of the rules that exist with the Ontario Securities Commission. They have to make sure that the investors in this new company are seeing a return on their investment. That's number one for them. It is not whether the electricity is affordable for Granny Smith in North Hastings to live in her home with her baseboard heat. They don't care about that. That's supposed to be public policy. The investors don't care about that.

When you remove the parts of Hydro One, Mr. Speaker, that make money from the ratepayer base of the company, you're left with fewer customers, who are predominantly living in locations that are harder to serve. You know what? When you remove those high-density customers from the mix, the cost of servicing those low-density customers is going to go through the roof. So the idea that the OEB—the Ontario Energy Board—will in any way be a safeguard against higher rates is one of the biggest jokes that the Minister of Energy has ever told in this House. It reminds me of the time that the Minister of Energy, when he was talking about what the gas plant cancellation was going to cost the people of Ontario—

Mr. Bill Walker: A cup of coffee.

Mr. Todd Smith: —he referred to it as a cup of Tim Hortons coffee.

Mr. Bill Walker: Shameful.

Mr. Todd Smith: That's what it was going to cost the people of Ontario. We all know it cost well in excess of \$1 billion to cancel those gas plants. But to him it was just a cup of coffee at Tim Hortons. It's the arrogance of this Liberal government that drives us bananas over here on this side of the House—the arrogance of this government.

But even if we were willing to accept the fact that the government doesn't really give a darn about how much

rural and northern Ontario residents pay for their hydro, why is there a public policy interest in preserving Hydro One in its current form? There's a really good reason. It's called winter, and believe it or not, although the Blue Jays are flying high and it seems like the boys of summer might be around for a while, winter is on the way here in Ontario. We regularly get four or five months of winter in this country—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Have you converted?

Mr. Todd Smith: Were you cheering for the Blue Jays?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes. Are you converting?

Mr. Todd Smith: I love the Blue Jays. There's a big game tonight, against the New York Yankees.

We have four or five months of winter here every year, with big, blowing snowstorms, and even a couple of polar vortexes from time to time. For weeks at a time, the temperature can be in the minus 20s or even minus 30s in parts of Ontario, and maybe, where Mr. Bisson is from, minus 40 or minus 50. In these conditions, heating your house isn't an option; it's a necessity of life. In a lot of these areas, these people are never going to be connected by a natural gas line. This leaves them with a couple of options: They either heat using an oil tank or heat with electric baseboard heating. If you've got electric baseboard heating, like a lot of people in my riding, if you ever take a look at your hydro bill in the winter, you know that heating your home is a good way to go poor pretty fast.

A constituent of mine from the western part of Prince Edward county had an electricity bill last winter in excess of \$900 because, in addition to the usual amenities in her house, she had electric baseboard heating. They never really set the thermometer at more than 65 Fahrenheit.

Parts of this province will never get connected to a natural gas line, as I say. Any increase in hydro rates is going to make it harder and harder for those residents to make it through the winter. I know that sometimes the members opposite tend to chuckle in disbelief when we say the choice is to heat or eat for a lot of people, but it's a reality for a lot of people in Ontario these days.

There are natural monopolies in what we do. They aren't always the same from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, but when you have the rural population that we have, when you have the winters that we have and when these people need to heat their homes, there exists a compelling public policy interest in not forcing these people into debt in order to do so.

However, the principle of selling Hydro One is only one of many problems that I have with the way that this government has conducted the sale.

In my time here, I have found that if this government can do things in the backroom with minimal consultation, by regulation, by order in council, by time allocation, or even by removal of oversight, then it's absolutely going to do that. It's what they've done in the four years that I've been here. Here we are with the Hydro One sale, and they're doing the exact same thing. Through schedules hidden in omnibus bills, the government has system-

atically removed all legislative oversight from Hydro One.

It says right in the opposition day motion, written by Ms. Horwath, that "the Auditor General, Ombudsman, Information and Privacy Commissioner, Integrity Commissioner, French Language Services Commissioner, Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, Environmental Commissioner and Financial Accountability Officer"—they all had an unprecedented press conference, as soon as the Legislature rose for the summer break, to talk about this, that the government was hiding this sale and removing any oversight that they had. That's why they're here, Madam Speaker. They're here to provide that oversight so we can have the checks and balances that we need to ensure that we're getting value for money if they are going to sell off Hydro One, and just to keep the government on the straight and narrow throughout this process.

Last Friday was the last time that we're ever going to know exactly what the senior executives at Hydro One will be making. The Minister of Energy and the Premier were quick on their feet today during question period to say, "No, that's not the case. They're going to have to disclose their salaries quarterly." "Their salaries" is the key; not the total compensation.

The member opposite mentioned Mayo Schmidt, the new CEO and president of Hydro One. On the first day that the Legislature resumed after the summer break, I asked the Premier in question period, "What are you going to pay your new CEO and president?" This guy is an accomplished guy, absolutely. I'm not taking anything away from Mayo Schmidt and what he has done. Apparently, he was a pretty good receiver for the Miami Dolphins at one time, too. He's a sharp cookie. He knows what he's doing. But we asked her, "Are you backing up the Brink's truck to pay for your new CEO and the new execs at Hydro One?" She didn't really answer the question and that's not unusual. But we found out, when the prospectus was released last week, that this new CEO is making \$4 million.

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The previous CEO, Carmine Marcello, had a salary of \$540,000, with total compensation of \$740,000. He's staying. He's not going anywhere. He couldn't get the job done. Hydro One was a mess. I think we can all agree—even the government can agree—that Hydro One was a mess. Sometimes I think the only reason they're selling Hydro One is because they want to get rid of the problem, and it's not about the cash. Then again, we know it's the cash, because she needs the cash.

What we're seeing is \$24 million for the top five at Hydro One. People who are struggling to pay their hydro bills, as I was mentioning earlier, are sick about that. They're sick about it. Five times what the previous CEO was making—and you know that the compensation is going to be more than that at the end of the day, and we're never going to hear about a lot of the compensation.

Mr. Bill Walker: Performance bonuses; kind of like the Pan Am Games.

Mr. Todd Smith: Kind of like the Pan Am Games; you're right.

Let's move on. The Ombudsman is going to be unable to advocate and investigate on behalf of ratepayers in the event that executives who failed in their jobs when previously on the board at Hydro One continue to do so. You know, if the new CEO fails to do his job—and I think he's probably going to do his job—he gets \$3.2 million. There's going to be no one to ensure that the public and ratepayers are actually receiving value for the millions of dollars that they're now paying the Hydro One executives. That's why the officers of the Legislature took that unprecedented step of jointly opposing the sale of the utility.

This is, without a doubt, the most underhanded aspect of this sale. It allows the government to climb high, up onto a pedestal, and make whatever claims it wants in support of the sale, because it knows that there's no oversight to check them. There's no end to which this Premier and this government will not go to ensure that the business of this province is conducted in the dark or behind closed doors or redacted for public consumption. It pretends that the non-answers and glib talking points put forward in this House are somehow a response to the legitimate concerns that are raised by the nature of this fire sale.

If I can return to the metaphor made by Prime Minister Macmillan over in Britain that began my speech, the Liberals have not only sold the Canaletto, the furniture and the silver, they've done it all without first letting an appraiser tell the family what it was worth. This government is in a rush to get this out the door, to get their hands on the money. The Premier has a plan that requires the government to pile up a massive amount of debt to fund new expenditures. Regardless of what the members opposite believe, that is the result of the Premier's long-term vision. We're talking about substantial amounts of debt that will increase the amount that this government ends up paying overseas bondholders, rather than putting that money into services. That's what the Auditor General warned us about in her report last year. That's what crowding out is.

This government maintains that this level of debt is necessary because it has things that it wants to pay for. Years of debt financing have led the government to sell assets, not because it wants to pay down debt or because it wants to deliver more efficient services, but because it simply needs that income.

Our energy critic is John Yakabuski from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, and he'll have more to say on this. But, in closing, I just want to congratulate again the members of the NDP for bringing this opposition day motion forward today. We are solid on this side of the house in opposition against this fire sale of Hydro One.

Two independent polls were released last week, or over the last couple of weeks, that show that more than 80% of the public is strongly opposed to the sale of Hydro One. I don't know why the Premier isn't listening to this, other than she needs to feed her spending addic-

tion, and that's why she's selling off one of our most valuable assets.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I think it's pretty clear that the Liberals will be voting against this motion. I'm not a betting man, but I know a sure thing when I see it. I listened to the member from Mississauga–Streetsville; it's entirely clear that the Liberals are not open to any form of consultation, any form of public hearing, any form of public process that will examine this deal, this very short-sighted, damaging project that the Liberals have launched. They will not allow us, or anyone else in this province, to have a hearing in which the evidence can be presented, the evidence judged and conclusions reached.

This government doesn't want the Hydro One sale examined in public, with any chance for legislators or lawyers to question decision-makers, to question those who wrote the reports that have not been released to us, to question those who have done the financial analysis that has not been released to us, to allow even the Financial Accountability Officer to get at the background documents so that that officer, put in place to defend our interests, will actually be able to do the thorough job that he needs to do.

They don't want the business case studied. They've locked out the auditor, they've locked out the Integrity Commissioner and a number of other officers of the Legislature whose job it is to protect the people of Ontario. In fact, in the Liberal books, the less studied, the better.

I've heard the Premier say that this whole process was done with a great deal of consultation. Speaker, the facts tell a very different story. I go back to the question periods and debates from the budget in 2014 when we in the NDP went after the Premier, went after the Minister of Finance on a constant basis, pointing out that everything they were doing was leading towards a sale of Hydro One. On an ongoing basis, we were told, "Absolutely not," that the assets, as the finance minister said, were going to be sweated, that they were going to do their best to maximize value. The word "sale," the word "privatization" never fell from Liberal lips in this House—never. And, Speaker, you and I well know that if this government had said it was privatizing Hydro One well over a year ago, or selling Hydro One well over a year ago, they would have had a very different political dynamic to deal with. So to say that the people of Ontario were consulted in the 2014 budget is not supported by the facts and not supported by the very words of the Premier herself and the Minister of Finance.

In the fall of 2014, Andrea Horwath, leader of our party, got up and regularly asked the Premier what her intentions were. I want to give you an example. On October 20, 2014:

"Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Why does the Premier think it's better to have Ontario's local hydro companies in the hands of private, for-profit

speculators rather than in the hands of Ontarians themselves?

“Honourable Kathleen O. Wynne: What the leader of the third party is asking about is the practical and sensible plan that we are moving forward with, to make sure that the assets of this province owned by the people of Ontario work to the very best advantage of the people of Ontario.”

“Work to the very best advantage of the people of Ontario”—anyone in this room put up your hand when you think that means sale or privatization. I would tend to read that as “work for the people,” rather than being sold off. She goes on:

“That’s the work that Ed Clark is doing with his council. He has said quite clearly that he doesn’t believe that selling those assets is the right answer. He has said that.”

“I believe that the leader of the third party is probably having a bit of a hard time framing the question because in fact Ed Clark has said he agrees that selling those assets is not the right thing to do.”

Speaker, I don’t know about you, but I listened to the question at the time, I listened to the answer at the time and I read the text now. The Premier said twice that her adviser, whom she was counting on, agreed that selling hydro assets was not the right thing to do. Most normal people—and in that, I don’t count politicians; I don’t count people who use a scalpel to dissect a sentence to find out what’s really in there, what the words really mean—would listen to that and think, “Oh, the Premier thinks that selling the assets is a bad idea. After all, her chief adviser thought it was a bad idea. She quoted him twice.” If I had a chief adviser who gave me advice I disagreed with, I wouldn’t be quoting him. I wouldn’t be quoting him twice. I think most people honestly would come to the conclusion that selling the assets was a bad idea. The adviser had said that; the Premier picked up on it; they weren’t selling. So to suggest otherwise does not hold with the facts. You don’t have to bend these words like a pretzel. You can read it plainly and clearly.

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So we went through the summer and the fall of 2014. We get to the spring of 2015, when the budget comes forward and the Hydro One privatization is unveiled in its full, inglorious self.

When the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs did its consultation before the presentation of the budget, it could have gone around the province, as it did, with the question: Should we sell off Hydro One?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: That would have been the honest thing to do.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, it would have been the honest thing to do. Frankly, Speaker—

Mr. John Fraser: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, the member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: I just think that that’s out of order, in terms of there’s a remark that was about telling the truth and honesty.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Okay. What’s out of order, and who said it?

Mr. John Fraser: The accusation that the Premier was not telling the truth.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Who said it? The member—

Mr. John Fraser: The leader of the third party.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): She said it was not true?

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: Not truthful, and just a minute ago, she said “honesty.”

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Honesty—I would define that as borderline. If it gets to another word we all are familiar with that starts with an “L,” then I’ll have a problem.

Go ahead.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, the pre-budget consultations travelled across the province, and there was not a single word about the sale or privatization of Hydro One that came from the lips of Liberal members—not one. Then there was time allocation on the budget debate and the hearings before the finance committee.

Given that this is the biggest privatization in the history of the province—unfortunately, it may not be the last, but to date it is the biggest—one would think that there would be a consultation commensurate with its consequence. That did not happen. Instead, we had a full verbiage covering up the reality—the reality of a plan to sell off a critical asset, critical to the economy, critical to the people of this province.

If there had been a consultation, the government would have been blasted. Look at the Environics poll showing around 80% opposed; the government’s own poll: 73% opposed. A poll done for the Ontario Energy Association showed 68% opposed. If the government had consulted, it would have started a movement against the sale that would have rolled right across this province.

The government says that Hydro One has to be sold to raise money for infrastructure—\$4 billion. The prospectus for Hydro One informs us that the annual dividend, anticipated to be approximately \$500 million, is going to be 70% to 80% of the target payout ratio—\$500 million a year, Speaker. If the government keeps Hydro One and simply allocates that \$500 million a year in profits to transit and infrastructure, in eight years it’s all the money this government is going to put in. In another eight years it’s another \$4 billion, and in another eight years another \$4 billion. Sell it for a one-time hit and get \$4 billion, or hold on to the goose that lays the golden eggs and you have an ongoing stream of revenue that can build infrastructure for decades to come.

Speaker, this proposal needs to be reviewed by the OEB. Those who made the decisions and those who wrote the reports need to be questioned. This wrong-headed, short-sighted and damaging proposal to sell off Hydro One has to be stopped.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's an honour to rise and speak to this important topic. Before I start, I just want to share a quick story about my background. I've shared with some of you parts of this story before. On my mother's side, my grandparents emigrated from eastern Europe to Canada; my grandfather arrived here in 1949. I learned a lot from my grandfather; I spent a lot of time with him as a kid. One of the first jobs my grandfather had when he arrived in Canada was actually building Hydro One. Later, as I got older, he told me how proud he was he played a role in building that infrastructure. He talked about it in terms that the government of the day had the vision to know that the population would grow and they would need these hydro lines and other supports, he used to call them—or infrastructure—to support that growth, to support the quality of life that we enjoy here in Canada.

My grandfather was also somebody who believed strongly that his responsibility was to make the investments to support future generations. He impressed that upon me very strongly and that's something I think about all the time as a representative and as I stand in this House.

Members of my constituency know—I hear it from members of my constituency all the time—how important infrastructure is to our quality of life, how important it is to our prosperity, how important it is to our economy. We know that over many years, governments have not invested enough in that infrastructure and that's why our government—our party—when we ran for election ran on a platform of investing \$130 billion in infrastructure; approximately \$30 billion, a little more than that, in transit and transportation infrastructure and about \$16 billion of that in the GTA.

These are the kinds of things that I was hearing about from my constituents when I was knocking on doors every single day: “We need roads. We need transit. We need schools. We need hospitals.” Those are the things that ensure we have the quality of life that they expect, that my grandfather worked so hard to build.

Now, the challenge is to pay for this infrastructure that was not built under previous governments. I think, for example, of the Conservative government of the 1990s that enjoyed record economic growth year after year after year, yet managed to run large deficits and managed not to make those investments. We are making those investments. We are making those investments because they're fundamental to our quality of life.

We need to be able to pay for those investments, and broadening the ownership of Hydro One is a fundamental component of being able to pay for that. The NDP cannot have it both ways. You cannot have the infrastructure without paying for it. Broadening the ownership of Hydro One in a responsible manner is how you ensure that we can have the infrastructure, that you find that balance, but you find a way to pay for it.

When you do these things, to do it in a responsible way, to do it in a balanced way, there are a number of things that I thought about, that I spoke to my constitu-

ents about to ensure it was done responsibly. One of them was to make sure that we address a challenge that previous governments have not been able to address—

Mr. Victor Fedeli: You've been there for 12 years. You know that, eh?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Nipissing.

Mr. Yvan Baker: —which is to enhance the performance of Hydro One. We know, and many voices have been expressed on this, many independent voices have expressed this, the Premier's Advisory Council on Government Assets determined that by broadening the ownership of Hydro One, the company will become more innovative, more competitive and more effective in its performance over time. That is an excellent way, arguably the most reliable way, to keep downward pressure on rates over time. That's one of the positive outcomes we can anticipate from this plan.

Another key component is keeping rates affordable for residents, keeping rates affordable for business. All of us on this side know how important that is and so we know that going forward, Hydro One rates that Hydro One imposes on customers will be regulated by the OEB. Not only that, we're going to go further than that. We've put forward legislation that will strengthen the OEB, and we hope that we have the support of members opposite on that. These two initiatives are going to help ensure that we keep downward pressure on rates.

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A lot of has been said about the level of control of Hydro One, and a number of mechanisms have been put in place to ensure that we have adequate control over Hydro One. I've already mentioned that the OEB will regulate rates, so I'm not talking about rates now. We will, by law, retain a 40% stake in Hydro One—a minimum 40% stake—we will nominate 40% of the board of directors, and no other individual or group of shareholders will be able to own more than 10% of Hydro One.

Critical decisions will require a two-thirds vote of the board, which means we have an effective veto over those. In addition, the government will have the unilateral right to remove the entire board. In my previous life, I worked advising large businesses, and I can tell you that a 40% stake in a company where no one else owns more than 10% is effective control. But we've gone further than that. We've gone further by saying we can remove the board; we've gone further by saying a two-thirds vote is required for major decisions. This is the appropriate level of control to make sure that ratepayers—taxpayers—are protected, while at the same time ensuring that we can maximize the benefits in support of the infrastructure that needs to be built.

I can also say that it is critical that we manage our taxpayer dollars wisely. I talk about this a lot—I talk a lot about it here—and several measures are being taken to make sure we realize the maximum possible value through this broadening of ownership, so that we can ensure we can support as much infrastructure as possible.

For example, the staged approach of selling shares in tranches is going to help us do that. In addition, the government has appointed Denis Desautels, the former Auditor General of Canada, to serve as special adviser to the Minister of Energy to help support a fair and transparent initial public offering.

Mr. Speaker, I've given you a number of steps that in summary will allow us to keep downward pressure on rates, allow the government and taxpayers to retain significant control over Hydro One, and support government in obtaining maximum value for taxpayers. This is in stark contrast to what was done when the 407 was sold.

When the 407 was sold—the 407 that was sold under the Conservative government that I was talking about earlier—a number of things come to mind that were different. The 407 sold at a significant discount to its actual value. During that sell-off, the government did not implement any regulation to protect the people who use the 407. That is in stark contrast to what we're doing here. And the proceeds from the 407 were not tied to any specific purpose. We are tying the proceeds specifically to infrastructure.

This is exactly what the people in Etobicoke Centre have told me they want: greater infrastructure investment, less gridlock, more hospitals, more schools, a better quality of life and a stronger economy. And that's fundamental to this plan.

Interjections.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I hear a lot of heckling right now from the NDP caucus, but what is interesting is that the leader of the third party talked about looking at provincial assets as part of the NDP platform when they ran for election. In fact, what she told Newstalk 1010 was, "There's no doubt we did talk in our platform about looking at some of the physical assets that the province owns. I mean, you can never be closed-minded about that." That was on May 7, 2015. But now she's against the plan. So she ran on a plan, and now she's advocating for something completely different.

On the PC side, the former Minister of Energy said, "The government announced on December 12, 2001, that it had decided to privatize Hydro One.... We believe this decision best serves the interests of Ontario taxpayers and electricity customers." That was 2002. Some of the things that have been said about this by the third party is talk about mandates. Well, this process has been open and transparent. We ran on a platform to modernize assets. In fact, they did too. The advisory council issued an interim report and a final report—both of those are publicly available—and many briefings were held for opposition members.

I started by talking about my grandfather. I started talking about the fact he believed that it was his responsibility and my responsibility and all of our responsibilities to think about future generations, and to build for the future. That's exactly what this plan is about. It's about investing in infrastructure to protect our quality of life and our economy. To do that, we've come up with a balanced, reasonable plan that will ensure that we can

help support stronger performance of Hydro One, that we can keep downward pressure on rates, that we can maintain a responsible level of control, an appropriate level of control, and get maximum value for the taxpayers of this province.

These are the values that my grandfather stood for and these are the values that I believe the constituents of my riding stand for. We are going to continue to invest, we're going to continue to act responsibly to build this province up, to enhance our quality of life, to grow our economy, and that is why I believe that the opposition motion is without merit and should be defeated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, we know where the Liberals stand, don't we?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: On the side of the people.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, I can ask the member from Etobicoke—no; yes, Etobicoke.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Etobicoke Centre.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Etobicoke Centre.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You're really helping. You've been here two seconds and you've yelled four times. Thank you very much. We'll be cutting that back, won't we, Minister of Transportation? Thanks so much. And there's a couple over there in the third party who are getting a little rowdy.

Continue.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I could ask the member from Etobicoke Centre—he spoke about his grandfather. I never knew his grandfather. Supposing my grandfather left me a family heirloom, and it's a wonderful, beautiful heirloom that has been passed on through generations, and I decide I'm going to sell that heirloom because I want a Ferrari. I wonder, when that Ferrari got old and rusty, as they all do, and it fell apart, and the repair bills—it simply wasn't worth keeping it going any more—how much my grandchildren would have thought of my decision to sell that heirloom and buy that Ferrari because I wanted to enjoy the benefits of having that fast money in my hands.

What do you think, I say to my friend from Windsor-Tecumseh? What do you think? I don't think my grandchildren would have appreciated that. But you see, that's where the Liberals are. I'm going to get back to that a little later, but I wanted to just touch on that and give some food for thought to the member from Etobicoke Centre.

When our new leader, Patrick Brown—all through the summer as he travelled the province, and when he was campaigning in the by-election—you know, the one that the Premier didn't want to call. When he was campaigning in that by-election, he heard about this Hydro One sale over and over and over again. And what happened in Simcoe North—and it's the only electoral example we have where the people have expressed an opinion—was that our vote in Simcoe North went up by 10% over the last election, and the Liberal vote plummeted. They had a candidate—it was his third time

running; well known; certainly had a profile in the community—yet our vote went up significantly, and the Liberals' vote went down.

One of the key issues that was talked about in that election—not the issues that the Liberals wanted to talk about, but the issue the people wanted to talk about—was electricity prices and the sale of Hydro One. So one of the first things our leader did, when he was elected to the Legislature, in reconfiguring the critics' roles here—I am still the energy critic, but Patrick Brown said, "You know what? This is so big, this is so important, that I am going to appoint a critic to deal specifically with the fire sale of Hydro One." Hence, we have a second energy critic, specifically dealing with Hydro One: my colleague from Prince Edward—Hastings, Todd Smith.

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There you go. We understand how important it is. My friends in the third party understand how important it is, because they're bringing it forth today for the second time—not exactly the same, because we know we can't do that. But it's not the first time they've brought an opposition day motion forward to deal with the sale of Hydro One.

You know, Speaker, the Liberals either don't get it or they don't care—

Mr. Bill Walker: Both.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —or maybe a little of both—thank you very much, Bill Walker—because, you see, all throughout this process, hardly a week has gone by that there hasn't been a poll conducted with respect to how the people feel about the sale of Hydro One.

One thing that is consistent, at least in my observations—sometimes I'm wrong, but for the most part, I think it has been going like this: Every time they do a poll, and every time the people seem to know a little bit more about what's happening here, they like it less. The more the people learn, the less they like it. So that means one of two things: Either the Liberals are just really bad salespeople, or maybe it's just the wrong thing to do in the first place and the people are just trying to get you to open your ears—

Mr. Bill Walker: Or both.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —or both, my friend from the Bruce; or both. The more they know about it, the less they like it.

All of this accountability that the Premier promised when she was being sworn in as Premier has been lost. That's why they brought in this opposition day motion today, because it speaks specifically to the officers—is it eight?—of the Legislature who have basically been frozen out and told, "Your services are no longer required," when it comes to filling in the blanks and letting the people know what's going on with the Hydro One sale.

When the majority passed the budget—and I hope the Liberal members explain that, when they go home to their constituents. I never heard a single Liberal candidate, and I never heard a person in my constituency in the 2014 election, say to me, "So, I hear the Liberals are

selling Hydro One. Wow." I never heard a word about that, never heard a word from the candidates, never heard a word from the public. But we're sure hearing about it now, I can tell you; we're sure hearing about it now.

Then they find out things like, last week, the prospectus. The new CEO, Mayo Schmidt, who—like I say, I have no doubt that he's a tremendously capable fellow, but how do you measure that? He's got a deal now; his base salary is \$815,000. That's not out of line, but he's got bonus incentives so that he could be making well over \$4 million.

Then the Minister of Energy, Mr. Chiarelli, says, "Oh, but he's going to have to do a really good job to get those bonuses." You mean sort of like Saad Rafi and all those folks at the Pan Am Games had to do a really good job to get their bonuses, equal to their salary, just by saying the games came in under budget? Well, when the budget was a moving target, so that every time somebody squawked, there was more money put into it, how could they not meet the budget?

If those are the kinds of challenges that are in place for Mayo Schmidt, then welcome to Liberal la-la land, because he's going to be making \$4 million. You can bet your sweet patootie on that, because he wouldn't have come here for less. He wasn't coming here for \$815,000, and you know it. Oops—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, guess what, folks? There's a lot of cross-dialogue, and the speaker's talking to everybody, having personal conversations. We've got outbursts from over here; we've got little personal cracks. How about, folks, from now on, we go through me, all right? No more offset conversations. Those days are gone. I don't want to have to put my foot down. I've been very lenient today, for me, and it's coming to an end quickly.

Continue.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Speaker, but I don't mind it over there at all. When I'm in this House, I just pretend that I'm the Liberals and they're the people, and I pay no attention to them, because that's what they seem to be doing when it comes to the sale of Hydro One.

We talked about Mayo Schmidt. He's going to get \$4 million a year—count on it. Then we've got Carmine Marcello. He's hired on as a special adviser. So what is he going to be advising them on? Customer service? Special adviser—this is the guy who couldn't get it right, resulting in the biggest Ombudsman investigation in the history of a public entity in the province of Ontario, and we've got him hired on as a special adviser at the meagre amount of \$519,000 a year, but eligible for a pension of \$428,000 a year. It's in the prospectus. My goodness gracious—a great deal for the people, eh? Just not all the people. Just the people in the prospectus; just the people who are getting paid off.

This is the kind of stuff, and you wonder why the public—the more they read about this, the more they hear about this, the less they like it.

But, you know, though, it comes down to the whole thing that if we actually believed for a moment that the Liberals philosophically believed that the right thing to do was sell Hydro One and make it private because they believed it was going to be bigger, better and more efficient, then at least there would be some validity to their argument. At least you could look in their faces and know that they believed in what they were doing. But, my goodness gracious, they don't believe a word they're saying. It's just like, "The orders have come out of the corner office, and we've just got to suck it up." That's what's happened. You see it over there in their faces every day. They don't talk about it in their ridings, because they don't want to talk about it, because they don't really believe it.

Why are they doing it? Because they're broke. And they made themselves broke, because they could never handle the budgeting process in this province. Now they've made some promises to balance the budget by 2017-18, and they think, "Okay, let's sell the family heirloom, buy that Ferrari, and have a good time." Maybe they'll think like Justin Trudeau and the budget will balance itself. Who knows?

Interjection: Nice hair, though.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Nice hair, yes.

So here they are. They're going to balance the budget by 2017-18, but they need that money for infrastructure. Now, I guess somewhere, when everybody was sleeping, all of a sudden, Ontario developed an infrastructure deficit, and we must sell off the public utility in order to be able to deal with that problem. They're going to put \$4 billion of a \$9-billion sale to infrastructure—\$4 billion. With all apologies to the sailors, that will disappear as fast as a Christmas bonus on shore leave. You guys are going to spend that; it's going to be gone; and what are you going to do next? Where are you going to get the next \$4 billion, I ask my friend from Scarborough? Where's it going to come from? What do you sell next? Are you going to sell the Pink Palace here? Are you going to sell it? You could try to sell MaRS, but you can't even get a tenant for that. Listen: Try to sell the planet. You might as well give a go on that, because you aren't doing very well on any of the other stuff.

It's absolutely sad what's going on here with the asset sale, simply because you want the money, not because you believe it's going to be good or better. It is going to be good for some, because the people who are in the business of buying and selling are going to be looking to make a profit on every transaction that takes place when those shares are sold.

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Interestingly enough, we don't know what the shares are going to be; we don't know what the value of those shares is going to be, because you don't know what the IPO is going to be for the share price. You've already promised and are giving some of those shares to employees as part of a collective agreement settlement, but you don't even know what the value of those shares is going to be. That's why when the people start to look at

this, they just shake their heads and say, "What in the name of Sam Hill is going on here? What are these people up to? It's just absolutely ridiculous."

The member for Etobicoke Centre used the word "critical." Well, I have prefix to that. It's "hypo": hypocritical. Because that's what it is when the Liberals start to talk. He was using quotes from the third party and using quotes from the Conservatives, and I did warn him; I did warn him that I have some quotes of my own here. They're not my quotes. Oh, no, no, no. They're not mine. But I have some here.

"Selling the crown jewel of our electricity system is a very serious mistake."

"At no time ... did [they] ... campaign on the sale of the transmission grid and therefore they have no mandate from the people to proceed with the sale."

"Any sale would generate huge fees for Bay Street brokers, large profits for Hydro One executives and would likely drive consumer prices up."

Those are just a few little quotes from my cousin Sean Conway, the former member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, former energy critic and senior cabinet minister in the Peterson government.

But he's not alone. Oh no, no. I've got whole pages of Sean's. But then we've got some here from Dwight Duncan:

"We do not believe it's in the province's interests, nor I do, to sell Hydro One. Hydro One is the nerve centre of our province. It is our power grid. It takes power from where it's generated to our retail suppliers in communities and it makes money." Dwight Duncan.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Do you have any quotes from Oliver Mowat?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have no quotes from Oliver Mowat.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): See, if you were going through me, you would have seen me stand up.

The Minister of Transportation has got his first warning. You're allowed one more; that's it.

And let's try to keep—how would I put it?—the decibel level down a bit. I know some members have the ability to bring out the best in all of us.

But continue.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You know, Speaker, I've got a lot of these, but I don't have a lot of time, unless we have unanimous consent to give me more.

But I know we get criticized sometimes. I wasn't around, and they like to bring up the past, but I've got quotes from the current members here, too, if you want them.

They like to talk about the fact that we, when we were in government, examined the possibility of selling Hydro One. Yes, we did. But, Speaker, we decided not to do it, because when you look at the fact that there is only one transmission grid in the province of Ontario, those wires have to be maintained and owned in the public interest. This deal is not in the public interest. This is a fire sale to

pay the bills for Liberal largesse of the past. They squandered the money like the prodigal son, and now they're coming home and they want to be welcomed. But you know what? Daddy is not going to welcome them and say, "Here, just sell this off at \$4 billion and take the money." No. The people of the province of Ontario have said quite clearly to you, "This is the wrong way."

Do we need infrastructure in this province? Yes. Is it in bad shape? Yes. Have you been the government for 12 years? Yes. Have you done little to deal with the problem? Yes. It is time that you showed some leadership, stood up, faced the facts that you have failed Ontario for 12 years, but take your medicine. Make the tough decisions that are required of a government, not the one to take a crown jewel, the most valuable asset that you own—you're starting with the big ones. You're going to sell the one that is going to have the biggest bang, the biggest revenue coming back to you, and then where do you go after that?

Face the facts. You have not managed the economy, you have not managed the budgets of this province, you have squandered the money, and now you're out of options. You've made a promise that you're going to balance by 2017-18. You know you can't. You know you can't unless you start selling off the crown jewels. Shame on you for that consideration. If you had done your homework, if you worked hard on behalf of the people of Ontario, if you had gone through the budget process properly and spent what you could afford, instead of sending us deeper and deeper in the hole, we wouldn't be dealing with this today. Shame on you. We're going to support the NDP motion.

Applause.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Who said it isn't exciting around here?

The member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That is a tough act to follow, but, today, this is a very serious issue. That is why this is our opposition day motion. In case you haven't noticed, we oppose on every front the sell-off of Hydro One, and we are bringing to the attention of this government the opaque process that they have used to move this agenda forward, which is not in the best interests of the people of this province.

If the Premier is so certain that privatizing Hydro One is the right move for Ontario, why will she not allow the Ontario Energy Board to review the planned sale? We have done everything that we can as the third party, as an opposition party. We have filed an FOI. We have found out that this government spent \$7.5 million of your money to make this case. We cannot access that information. The Financial Accountability Officer cannot access that information. There is no business case, there is no moral case, and there is no economic case for the sell-off of Hydro One. It does not exist. Ontarians are wondering why the province—why this government, why Kathleen Wynne—why the Premier is moving forward with this short-sighted decision to sell off Hydro One. We are doing our job, I think, by bringing their concerns to this

place. It would be good if the province listened, because this is a reasonable request that we are making, that the OEB review this decision.

People across the province are also wondering why their hydro rates continue to go up. To get that answer, you have to go back in time somewhat, all the way back to 1999, when Hydro One was first broken up into five companies. Ontario Hydro and all the municipal hydros were changed from non-profit commissions into for-profit corporations and since that time, despite promises to the contrary, hydro rates have risen over 320%—10 times the rate of inflation. We pay double the amount that people in Manitoba and Quebec pay. Private companies like Magna have stated that they won't locate here because of our hydro rates. There's a connection, obviously, between hydro rates and the economy and investment in this province. It is clear to everyone in this House that that exists, except for that side of chamber.

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce has raised the red flag, and don't mistake it, it is a red flag because this party, the Liberal Party of Ontario, will own this decision. This has been called the largest transfer of wealth from the public sector to the private sector in the history of this province. It is a shameful, shameful decision that they are going forward with.

Where is the demand? That is another issue. That is why we are speaking up so strongly. There have been no public demonstrations outside Queen's Park demanding that Hydro One be privatized. The demand is coming very clearly from Bay Street and the investment community, and obviously, as has already been stated, this government is looking for a quick fix. Well, that quick fix is not to be found in the selling off of a public asset which generates revenue. The members on the other side of the House have said that our leader was mentioning the selling off of public assets. That interview had to do with real estate, and that was very clearly indicated in our platform. Never would this party ever move forward with the sale of a public asset which generates \$500 million a year for investment in infrastructure. We never would do that, and it's part of our history, Mr. Speaker, to that end.

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The Liberals are promising that all the money from this sale will go towards transportation infrastructure. Infrastructure lasts 40 to 50 years and then it needs to be rebuilt again. We're facing that crisis today. The problem with selling public assets is that you can only sell them once. We said that 14 years ago. It's like burning the furniture to heat your home. The promise you have put on the table is \$130 billion. The sell-off of Hydro One is \$3 billion and then it's gone. You lose \$500 million a year. It is not in the best interests of the people of this province.

Liberals are also promising that rates for private owners will be kept down by regulation. This is easily refuted—easily refuted. Look at the partial privatization of generation in Ontario. Rates have skyrocketed under so-called regulation. Ontario doesn't really have regulation. It has the appearance of regulation. It's more

accurate to say that the electricity rates are regulated for six months at a time.

The private sector does a fabulous job of manufacturing transformers, insulators, wires, relay switches, connectors and all the materials we need to build our electrical system, but they do a poor job of running hydro in the public interest. They can't. Their fiduciary duty legally requires them to work in the best interests of their shareholders. You clearly do not get that concept; you clearly do not.

You have not done your fiduciary responsibility on behalf of the people of this province because you're moving ahead with this sell-off. You know—the back-benchers, the middle-benchers, the front-benchers, all of you know that you have no mandate. You did not campaign on the sell-off of Hydro One, and it is reasonable for you to go back to your constituents in your ridings and say, “We are going to have the Ontario Energy Board look at this decision in the interests of openness and transparency,” which you are clearly redefining each and every day that you sit in this House because there is nothing open and transparent about this deal. You owe the people of this province to do the due diligence, to show them the business case, because this decision will impact their lives for the rest of their days in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Todd Smith): Further debate?

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's nice to see you sitting in that chair and keeping us under control.

I'd like to start off with talking about that just this morning I listened to the Premier speak about broadening the ownership of Hydro One, and what I heard her say loud and clear is that this is, and never was, an easy decision to make. But as we can all attest, leadership should not be about accomplishing what is easy. This move, despite what the opposition is saying, will provide billions of dollars to help invest in Ontario and finance the single largest investment in transit and transportation infrastructure in the province's history.

In northern Ontario, specifically in my riding of Sudbury—and I know other northern members present will agree—we need continued support for our infrastructure investments. Every spring in my riding of Sudbury, the snow melts and we take stock of the level of damage that winter has done on our roads, for example. Just yesterday, in fact, the city of Greater Sudbury met and discussed its plans moving forward for road repair—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Todd Smith): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Todd Smith):—please be quiet. Thank you.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The work is vital, Mr. Speaker, but it's not cheap. Over \$40 million is needed in Sudbury alone, and the municipality should not be left to shoulder this burden on

its own. On top of the normal road damage caused by fluctuating temperatures—freezing and thawing to our roads in Sudbury—we know that the effects of climate change will begin to intensify the stress put on infrastructure throughout the province and that, especially in northern Ontario, we will see increasing numbers of intensity and extreme weather patterns. That's why we are increasingly hearing calls for the province to invest in resilient infrastructure; that is, infrastructure that will be more likely to withstand the stresses that nature will inevitably place upon it, but of course this, too, also comes with increased costs.

The Premier has made it clear that this move, broadening the ownership of Hydro One, will allow for the investment we need in infrastructure in vitally important bridges, highways and public transit in communities across Ontario.

Just a couple of weeks ago, I was pleased to be able to announce the completion of another nine kilometres of four-laning for Highway 69. I'm happy to say that progress continues on this as well, with another 11 kilometres opening next year.

I'm also pleased that the government has committed to funding its share of the Maley Drive extension, the priority project of the city of Greater Sudbury.

Our economy in Sudbury and in the north is dependent on our ability to move natural resources to market, to transport ore from one mine to the smelter, lumber from source to mill. That's why I'm pleased to rise today in support of the government's plan to do the right thing, not the easy thing, and invest in our infrastructure.

I find it interesting, when you hear the debate coming from the opposition, that the status quo is what they want, but for the longest time they've been complaining about customer service and billing. We're moving forward with broadening our ownership, but they would much rather keep everything the same.

We are moving forward with progress to make sure that we will invest in infrastructure and invest in our cities. It will also help create an even stronger-performing Hydro One, with a new board and management team that have signalled their dedication to improved performance, customer service and system reliability. This move will serve both the broad public interest and the interests of Hydro One customers. Hydro One will be a widely held, highly regulated, customer-focused public company that offers dependable dividends and robust, predictable growth prospects.

In short, this move is a win-win for the public and for Hydro One customers. It will help finance new infrastructure investments and lead to an even better-performing company. To protect the public interest and to ensure that all Ontarians will benefit from the future revenues of this company, the government of Ontario would, by law—I say that again: by law—remain the largest shareholder in Hydro One.

Despite the fearmongering by the opposition, rates will continue to be set independently by the OEB. As the new management team succeeds in strengthening

performance, such efficiencies should be reflected in downward pressure on rates.

In closing, our government is working to strike the appropriate balance so that the people of Ontario keep the largest share of ownership, gain billions to build infrastructure, pay down debt, avoid having to borrow money and strengthen the protections that ratepayers enjoy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, I am proud to rise today with my NDP colleagues to stand against the sell-off of Hydro One by this government. It's one of the duties as an MPP that I'm extremely proud of doing, actually. Whether it's the petitions I've received in my office, the numerous emails and letters from people in my riding, the town hall that happened in London or the town halls that have been happening across this province, it's clear to me and it should be clear to this government that Ontarians do not want the government to sell off Hydro One.

The outcome of a sell-off of Hydro One would hurt every person in Ontario. Rates would go up, which would affect communities from Wawa to Windsor to Welland. Every single community would be directly impacted by this decision. Families and seniors could see up to \$300 or more on their electricity bills every year, making it significantly harder for those struggling to make ends meet. We are not making that up. The government hasn't confirmed or promised or determined or shown evidence that the rates will not go up.

More and more Ontarians are unemployed and the manufacturing sector in southern Ontario is struggling, yet this government wants to make it more expensive to live in our province. That's the wrong decision and it's not to be made at this time. It's never to be made. It's never a good decision to sell off an asset that generates revenues.

Concerns around the public accountability and electric reliability have also been raised by many. So many years Ontarians have been in control of Hydro One and they have seen revenues—we've talked about those revenues; they're \$500 million a year—that pay into education and health care, which is what people need, the services in this province. Why is this government more interested in having private interests holding a share of our public electric company and not the people of this province? This issue has been brought up by the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario, who is no longer able to oversee the right of access to records held by Hydro One. This is not what Ontarians want or deserve from their government.

1730

Mr. Speaker, the privacy commissioner wasn't the only one to call into question this move of the government. Earlier this year, there was a call from Ontario's independent officers of the Legislature asking this government to reverse their plans to sell off Hydro One. The Financial Accountability Officer, the Auditor General, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth and

others were clear that selling off Hydro One would be the wrong way to go for this province.

The lack of consultation and the frank ignorance from this government, from experts, is another example of this government taking the people of Ontario for granted.

I am proud to stand with my NDP colleagues today against the short-term thinking of this government. Nonetheless, I cannot even begin to explain the amount of opposition this disastrous decision of selling off Hydro has received across this province. Some 139 municipalities have passed motions calling for a stop to the sale of Hydro One.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: That's 139.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes, 139.

A 36-member coalition of local chambers of commerce has organized to express concerns over the effects on the economy from this sale. The Chiefs of Ontario stated that this government failed in its duty to consult with First Nations about the sale. The uproar from this sale has spread across the province.

When Mike Harris and Ernie Eves tried to sell off Hydro One in the 1990s, the NDP stood adamantly against it then. Now this Liberal government is trying to sell off Hydro, and the NDP will continually stand up adamantly to stop the sale of Hydro One.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I welcome the opportunity this afternoon, as always, to lend my voice and provide input on this important discussion that we're having. There's not a lot of time on the clock for me this afternoon, so I'm going to do my very best to narrow my comments.

This is my first opportunity since we returned after the summer break to speak to an initiative put forward by opposition members. Speaker, as I listened to the debate coming particularly from the New Democratic caucus on the other side—I'm going to ignore the official opposition because I don't have the time to delve into their sordid history as it relates to an infrastructure deficit that exists in this province. I'm going to ignore that for a quick second. I used a term near the end of last session, before we recessed for the summer, and the term, which at that time was in reference to the NDP, was something that I called "convenient mythology." Over the summer months, when we had a chance to go back to our constituents and have a bit of a discussion and a conversation about how best to move the province forward and how best to work together, I had sincerely hoped that those members and the people they represent in their communities would have collectively come to the understanding that it's important to move beyond that convenient mythology; it's important to no longer forget that there was a broad consultation that occurred. I know they're fond of forgetting that a very broad and exhaustive consultation occurred with the people of Ontario in 2014. I had sincerely hoped and I know that the people I represent in Vaughan had hoped that those members in that caucus and certainly their leader would

have come to the conclusion that it's best to be constructive going forward.

In today's motion, put forward by the leader of the NDP, the one sentence, or at least the portion of a sentence, that really jumps out at me is the following: "It is the opinion of this House" etc. "conduct an independent, public, non-partisan review on the impact" and it goes on from there. As I look at those members and I hear not only in the Legislature on a regular basis but in correspondence that I receive and conversations that I'm privileged to have, as the Minister of Transportation, with many members on that side, it's interesting to me that I've never heard a single member from that caucus, including that leader, ever ask for an independent, public, non-partisan review of the crucial infrastructure projects that we are committing to building and that we are building currently in the province of Ontario. For example, I've never heard Ms. Horwath, the leader of that party, say, "Before you extend GO service to Stoney Creek and Hamilton, what I want to see is an independent, public review of whether it's the right decision." I've never heard her say, "Before you build an LRT in my hometown of Hamilton, wait a second, Premier Wynne, wait a second, Del Duca and the rest of the guys and women over there. Stop. I want an independent review of that particular project."

Just in the debate this afternoon, I've heard members on that side talk about the need for more highway investments in the Windsor-Essex area. I've heard the member from Renfrew talk about the 417. I see the member from Wellington-Halton Hills over there. I see the honourable member from Wellington-Halton Hills—I believe that's the name of his riding. He's a staunch advocate for the Morriston bypass. I see members who represent the nearly 80 communities that will benefit directly from the re-establishment of a stand-alone Connecting Links fund—a Connecting Links fund that in part will be supported by the broadening of the ownership of Hydro One.

Not once has that leader of that party said, "Before you build, before you provide more infrastructure options, before you build an LRT in my community, before you provide support to municipal transit systems, before you build the Hurontario-Main LRT, before you transform GO regional express rail and build across all seven corridors"—so much more for the future, Speaker. I've never heard her say, "Before you improve our economic productivity by investing in infrastructure and before you improve quality of life for tens of thousands of families across this province, stop and conduct an independent review." Let me see if I can get that right: an independent, public, non-partisan review. Not once in all of the occasions, whether it's two-way, all-day GO service for Kitchener-Waterloo, whether it's phase 2 of the Ottawa LRT—Speaker, I look at the members over there from the London area, whether we're talking about—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Okay.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You don't even stop when I stand up.

The member from Kitchener-Waterloo is having a real pointing and yelling set. You don't do that. It's through me, and you're not even standing up to talk.

The member knows better than to have cross-dialogue; he knows better than that. Through me.

Continue.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: My apologies, Speaker. As I was saying, through you, not once over the last 15 or so months since I became the minister, and certainly not once since we have moved forward on the commitment that was in our platform—and in their alleged platform last year as well—that was in our budget, the first version of our budget and the second version of our budget, endorsed by the people of Ontario, endorsed by this Legislature; not once since that election happened or since that budget passed has a single member over there, including that leader, had the nerve to say, "Don't spend, don't invest, don't build unless you conduct a review like this."

Again, Speaker, the NDP, as always, is never done pandering.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ça me fait plaisir d'ajouter quelques mots à ce débat. Le débat est vraiment simple. Tout ce qu'on demande, c'est de s'assurer que les Ontariens et Ontariennes auront la chance d'avoir les détails avant que n'importe quelle vente d'Hydro One puisse aller de l'avant. C'est quand même un gros pas qu'on est en train de faire là. On est en train de vendre le système de distribution d'électricité pour toute notre province. On comprend bien qu'une fois que c'est vendu—c'est un aller sans retour, cette affaire-là. Une fois que c'est vendu, on ne pourra jamais retourner en arrière.

Quand on regarde à une décision de cette importance, ce n'est pas anormal que les gens veuillent avoir les détails, parce qu'en ce moment, on ne connaît rien de rien. Il n'y a pas eu de consultations publiques. Il n'y a pas eu la chance de voir quels étaient les pour et les contre de cette décision-là. Ça s'est fait en arrière de portes closes, et on n'a pas eu droit à ça. La nature humaine est ce qu'elle est. Quand on ne sait pas ce qui s'est vraiment passé, on imagine le pire.

Si tu regardes dans la province en ce moment, 83 % des Ontariens et Ontariennes ne veulent rien savoir de vendre Hydro One. Ils veulent que leur gouvernement prenne le temps de les écouter. On vit dans une démocratie. Une démocratie veut dire que lorsque tu as quelque chose à dire, tu as la chance de parler et tu as la chance d'être entendu. Tout ce qu'on demande dans la motion, c'est ça : on demande la chance d'être entendu par un organisme qui existe déjà. Ce ne seront pas des dépenses inutiles qu'on vient de faire là. La Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario existe déjà. Ils font des consultations tout le temps, parce qu'à chaque fois qu'on

doit changer le taux de l'électricité, c'est eux qui font les consultations. Quand ils font ces consultations-là, il y a des dépôts de papiers aussi hauts que moi pour une augmentation de 1 % ou 1,2 % du taux de l'électricité.

1740

On est en train de vendre ça, et tout ce qu'on a, c'est un rapport de 42 pages qui a été fait par M. Ed Clark, qui est banquier et qui n'a aucune connaissance du côté—il l'a dit lui-même; il n'est pas expert en énergie. On n'a pas eu la chance non plus d'avoir des consommateurs qui ont leur mot à dire là-dessus, mais on a le produit final. On a un gouvernement qui ne veut pas écouter.

I represent people in Mattagami who depend on Hydro One. They live at the end of the line. Once Hydro One is privatized, what is their guarantee that they will continue to have electricity? We all know there is no money to be made in bringing electricity to Mattagami, no money to be made. Once you deal with a private enterprise that is 60% within the private sector, there will be no reason for them to continue to bring electricity to many parts of the province that I represent. They just want to be heard.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I just want to stand up and talk about the transportation minister's comments on how we never talked about this. I can tell you what: When I ran in Niagara Falls not once, not once—not once—did one of your candidates ever say they were going to sell off Hydro One. Not once in Fort Erie, when we did the budget debates, did they ever say they were going to sell off Hydro One. They did not tell one resident in my riding that they wanted to sell off Hydro One. So I want you to say that, that you never, ever told them, not once. For your comments about the NDP, at least you should have told them; you should have stood up and said, "We're selling Hydro One because we think it's the best thing to do." They never did that, not once, and they still haven't done it, and for anybody to say they did is certainly not accurate.

Let's talk about what we're going to get, because I don't have a lot of time here. Let's talk about what you would get if you kept Hydro One. You'd get \$500 million per year to invest in health care, to invest in schools, to invest in infrastructure. So why do you have to sell it off?

Who are you going to hurt if the rates go up? Let's talk about that, because nobody seems to care about the consumer. Who are you going to hurt? You're going to hurt seniors right across Ontario, because they have to choose between paying for their hydro bill or paying for their medication. Or, in the summer, do they pay for their air conditioning or do they pay for their food? That's what hydro is going to do in the province of Ontario.

Let's talk about young people. Let's talk about the jobs in the manufacturing sector that we all need. Let's talk about the auto sector. Let's talk about GM, Chrysler and Ford, who are telling this government over and over again—not once, not twice; they're telling you over and over again—that they will not invest in Ontario if the

hydro rates continue to go through the roof. You are putting hundreds of thousands of jobs in jeopardy by selling hydro. Why are we not talking about that?

I've got a couple more to talk about here. Let's talk about tourism. I had the hotel owners in my riding, in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Niagara Falls and Fort Erie, and you know what they're telling me? "Gatesy, what do you want us to do if they sell off Hydro? Raise the rates of the rooms? Are we going to have to shut off the air conditioning? Are we going to have to stop the water parks?"

I've got to wrap it up. You never told anybody in the province of Ontario you were selling. You guys should be ashamed of yourselves for even selling Hydro One and putting the effects—your effects—on what's going to happen right across Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's been a pretty important debate this afternoon. The motion that I put forward was simply to ask this government to do the right thing by the people of Ontario and have the Ontario Energy Board do a review of their plan to sell off Hydro One. It's not a lot to ask; it's what the people of this province deserve. They deserve an independent analysis. They deserve a non-biased approach. They deserve public hearings. They deserve absolute and complete transparency on one of the biggest mistakes that the Liberal government is about to make in the province of Ontario. They deserve to have a voice and they deserve to be heard, and the way that they can do that is through the OEB. And you know what, Speaker? That's exactly what this Premier, Premier Wynne, promised that she would do for the people of Ontario. She promised she would be open. She promised she would listen. She promised she would be transparent. She even promised, when she set up the Ed Clark panel, that he was going to make sure that this was going to be a process that was independently reviewed, that was transparent, and it has been none of those things.

I have to say, though, a lot of my members, and I'm proud of them, spoke about the impact of the sell-off of Hydro One, and also spoke about the false choice that Liberals are putting in front of Ontarians. Everybody knows that everywhere around that we can think of where there's been an example of a privatization in the electricity system, the rates have gone through the roof. Bottom line, it's going to happen here. In fact, we saw just on Friday exactly what's going to add to the increasing prices of our electricity rates. It's because already the executives are at the trough with raises like nobody's business. Five, 10, 20 times the amount of money is going to now be paid to executives and board members than what was paid in the past.

But you know what? The Liberals want to pretend that the only way you can invest in infrastructure in this province is by selling off Hydro One. Well, how embarrassing for them. For over 100 years there have been things built and developed here in this province and nobody else had to sell off Hydro One. How embar-

rassing that only this Liberal government has no other choice than to sell off Hydro One. And you know what, Speaker? That's because it's not true. There are many, many other choices to get our infrastructure built in this province.

I'll tell you what I wouldn't do. I wouldn't be wasting over a billion dollars on moving gas plants in this province. I'll tell you what else I wouldn't do. I wouldn't spend \$2 billion on a useless, not-so-smart meter program. That's \$3 billion so far. I wouldn't have an \$8-billion failure when it comes to how we fund infrastructure in the first place. This minister should not be very proud of that—\$8 billion that could have gone into more infrastructure, but he wasted it because he has a terrible, terrible financing system. How about another billion dollars on eHealth? How about the waste of hundreds of millions of dollars on Ornge air ambulances? I'm just saying that there are lots of other choices. How about corporate tax loopholes that they've implemented? How about the fact that our corporate tax rate is lower than that of Alabama?

The bottom line is, there are many, many choices that can be made. This Liberal government does not have to sell off Hydro One. This Liberal government wants to sell off Hydro One, because it's going to make a lot of the one percenters, a lot of their good friends, a lot of the insiders on Bay Street a hell of a lot of money, and that money is going to come out of the pockets of everyday people in this province, and it is shameful that they're doing this with such a closed-door process.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): When I stand, you sit.

Ms. Horvath has moved opposition day number 1. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour of this motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

I believe the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1749 to 1759.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Ms. Horvath has moved opposition day number 1. All those in favour of this motion will please rise one at a time.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.
Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Clark, Steve
DiNovo, Cheri
Fedeli, Victor
Fife, Catherine
French, Jennifer K.
Gates, Wayne
Gélinas, France
Gretzky, Lisa
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hatfield, Percy
Hillier, Randy
Horvath, Andrea
Jones, Sylvia
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
Mantha, Michael
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
Natyshak, Taras

Nicholls, Rick
Pettapiece, Randy
Sattler, Peggy
Scott, Laurie
Smith, Todd
Tabuns, Peter
Thompson, Lisa M.
Vanthof, John
Walker, Bill
Yakubski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): All those opposed to the motion, please stand one at a time.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Anderson, Granville
Baker, Yvan
Balkissoon, Bas
Ballard, Chris
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
Dong, Han
Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fraser, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoggarth, Ann
Hoskins, Eric
Hunter, Mitzie
Jaczek, Helena
Kiwala, Sophie
Lalonde, Marie-France
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Malhi, Harinder
Mangat, Amrit
Martins, Cristina
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McGarry, Kathryn
McMahon, Eleanor
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milczyn, Peter Z.
Moridi, Reza
Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Naqvi, Yasir
Oraziotti, David
Potts, Arthur
Qaadri, Shafiq
Rinaldi, Lou
Sandals, Liz
Thibeault, Glenn
Vernile, Daiene
Wong, Soo
Zimmer, David

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 37; the nays are 51.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made. It's now late show time.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

WIND TURBINES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Prince Edward-Hastings has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given to him by the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for five minutes.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'm glad to be here on this Wednesday afternoon to further debate this issue that affects so many people on the south shore of Prince Edward county, but not just people in Prince Edward county. People right across the province are watching this case very, very closely because of the implications that it might have for wind turbine development in Ontario going forward.

It was last Wednesday that I had the opportunity to ask the Minister of Natural Resources whether or not they would revoke the project, or at least revoke the harm, harass and kill permit that they gave the Ministry of the Environment to build a nine-turbine project on the south shore of Prince Edward county at Ostrander Point. It's a very, very environmentally sensitive area for a number of different reasons, but it's also designated as an internationally recognized Important Bird Area.

The people of Prince Edward county have been opposing wind turbines in their municipality for 13 years

now, even long before the Green Energy Act came about. This is the remarkable thing about the people of Prince Edward county: They're like a dog and a bone. They're not going to give up on this, and now they have a bone. They have some evidence that this government is making decisions on where green energy projects, renewable energy projects, are being located in the province not because of good policy decisions, but they're being made for political reasons, not for good policy reasons.

I see the minister is here, and that's great. I was very congenial in agreeing not to have the late show last Wednesday so that they could attend an event, and we're here today to further debate this issue.

The nine-turbine project is on a piece of crown land on the south shore of Prince Edward county. There are so many people who are against it in the county, it's unbelievable. Prince Edward county is an unwilling host community. They've made that declaration at their council. The chamber of commerce, the Prince Edward County Field Naturalists; PIBO is another, the bird observatory group. We also have APPEC, which is the Alliance to Protect Prince Edward County, and then we have CCSAGE, which is the County Coalition for Safe and Appropriate Green Energy. All of these different groups are against the project on the south shore.

But the issue that we're really looking at here tonight is, back in September 2011, there was a Big Thunder wind project that was planned for the minister's riding. He wasn't the minister at the time, but we were headed into the general election in 2011. The Minister of Natural Resources at the time, who's now the mayor of Brampton, recommended that a project not be approved in the minister's riding because there may be some peregrine falcon nests in the area.

Now this current minister's own expert for species at risk has testified at an Environmental Review Tribunal in Prince Edward county that there is a real concern here because they know this is a breeding area for the Blanding's turtle. So there are endangered species in that area, but in spite of his recommendations against the harm, harass, kill permit from MNR, they granted the permit anyway. The project is going ahead. The project in Thunder Bay was cancelled when there wasn't the proof that there is in this case. There's clear evidence, and his own expert has testified at an Environmental Review Tribunal that this project shouldn't go ahead based on that ground.

Now, this is still before the Environmental Review Tribunal, so I don't know exactly what the minister is going to be able to tell us today. But it only seems logical to me that, given what has transpired now, in spite of all of the other reasons that are out there, we don't need any more power. We have 34,000 megawatts of power already in the province, so nine turbines on the south shore of Prince Edward county are completely unnecessary. But what I want to know today is: Will the minister overturn the anti-scientific decision that was made in spite of the advice of his ministry's own experts

and revoke the permit that it gave to Gilead Power to install these nine industrial wind turbines that the municipality has clearly said they don't want on the south shore of Prince Edward county? What will the minister tell us this evening?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Hon. Bill Mauro: Speaker, let me remind the member of what I said last week in response to his concern, and that is that, first and foremost and primarily, these green energy projects go forward as a result of renewable energy approval applications that are granted from the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change. They have a two-step process primarily: One, at some point they'll have a FIT contract that they receive from the Ministry of Energy; and concurrent with that, they receive, at some point, an approval from the Minister of Energy and Climate Change under renewable energy approval. That's the same way it works for all of them.

Now, this project is before the Environmental Review Tribunal, as the member has mentioned in his comments, and so obviously it's inappropriate for me to comment on the particulars of this project in any way. He knows that and has acknowledged that in his comments as well. But I will make just a few remarks, without giving any reference to any particular matters in a general way in terms of the ERB. Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry staff review and evaluate applications for permits made under the ESA. Evaluation and development of a permit can take months and a team would be involved that could include biologists, ecologists, botanists, policy staff, planners, land experts, among others. The team approach works well, and as I mentioned, there is a variety of different opinions that go into the development of these permits and a variety of views are taken into account.

In the end, a recommendation is made based on the requirements of the ESA. An overall benefit permit under the ESA may only be issued if the three tests set out in sections 17.2(c) of the ESA are met.

In summary, the tests are: that an overall benefit to the species will be achieved in a reasonable time through the requirements imposed in the permit conditions; that reasonable alternatives have been considered and the best alternative has been adopted; and that reasonable steps to minimize adverse effects on members of the species are required by conditions of the permit.

The member from Prince Edward-Hastings has made reference to a different project. That particular project did not go forward based on any recommendation from the Ministry of Natural Resources or lack thereof. As I understand it, that particular project was cancelled by what was then called, I believe, the Ontario Power Authority, which is now part of the IESO.

Speaker, I thank you for your time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1811.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, William Short

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
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Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
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Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
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Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Brown, Patrick (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade / Ministre des Affaires civiles, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
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Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
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Hardeman, Emie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
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Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
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MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadi, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
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Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
Laurie Scott, Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 41st Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 41^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 24 September 2015

Jeudi 24 septembre 2015

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 24 September 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 24 septembre 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRENGTHENING CONSUMER
PROTECTION AND ELECTRICITY
SYSTEM OVERSIGHT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 POUR RENFORCER
LA PROTECTION DES CONSOMMATEURS
ET LA SURVEILLANCE
DU RÉSEAU D'ÉLECTRICITÉ

Mr. Chiarelli moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 112, An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 / Projet de loi 112, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2010 sur la protection des consommateurs d'énergie et la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I'll be sharing my time this morning with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Mississauga—Streetsville.

Before I start my remarks, in the moment of reflection we just had here in the Legislature, my thoughts of reflection had to do with the tragic events that occurred in the riding of my critic and good friend the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. We are all shocked by what happened in the community. I'm sure we all share the concern of the member for the events that unfortunately occurred in his riding.

Today, I rise to begin second reading debate of Bill 112, the Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act, 2015. This legislation moves forward one of the vital pillars of our electricity modernization plan announced last spring, our proposed legislation that would strengthen the Ontario Energy Board Act.

As announced in April, our government is broadening the ownership of Hydro One in order to make the largest single investment in transit and transportation infrastructure in this province's history. Our government's plan is to make a major dent in our infrastructure deficit by investing \$130 billion over the next 10 years in transit, roads, bridges and other economic assets. A significant part of these investments will come from the net proceeds of the broadening of ownership of Hydro One.

It is important to recognize that these billions of dollars in proceeds will pay down debt and pay for infrastructure, and that will be done without borrowing, without adding new taxes or without cutting important programs. This approach will support more than 20,000 jobs each year and provide a major driver for economic growth in every region of Ontario, including the riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, the riding of my energy critic, and it is being done in a way that protects the public interest.

The Ontario Energy Board is a central part of this focus on protecting the public interest. This independent agency has the power to approve or disapprove rate increases. Regardless of the utility before them, the OEB's mandate is to protect the interests of ratepayers and to set just and reasonable rates. Whether that utility is owned by a single municipality, like Hydro Ottawa or Toronto Hydro, does not matter, they are all included, or by multiple municipalities like York region's Power Stream, they are also included. They're all included. And it includes private companies like Fortis, Union Gas and Enbridge.

Let me re-emphasize this point, Mr. Speaker: It is the Ontario Energy Board that sets the rates that can be charged to ratepayers, not Hydro One or Toronto Hydro or Ontario Power Generation or Enbridge. They cannot set their own rates; they never have been able to. That has been the way up until now for Hydro One and it will continue to be that way after Hydro One's ownership is broadened.

We have heard a great deal of baseless, unmitigated spin by members opposite that a utility like Hydro One, as its ownership is broadened, would see rates rise as a result of broadening ownership. I will repeat again: The OEB sets rates for municipally owned utilities, for generators, for private companies such as Enbridge and Union Gas, and it will continue to set rates for Hydro One.

In the words of the leader of the third party in a letter she copied me on just two days ago—I'd like to read a quote from that, one sentence: "The Ontario Energy Board is legislated to protect the interest of consumers with respect to prices and the adequacy, reliability and quality of electricity service." So then, when a leader stands up and says that Hydro One will be able to raise its own rates, she is talking against her own words in her own quote in a letter she signed two days ago.

There are numerous examples of times when the OEB has, in fact, received an application to increase rates and delivered a reduced rate for consumers instead. This is

done based on facts and evidence filed before the board. This is done based on an open and transparent public hearing process. Plenty of advocates go before these hearings and weigh in, look at the evidence that is used to base rate increases on, and then the energy board makes a determination. This is done with fairness for the ratepayer and with customers foremost in mind.

For example, in 2010, Hydro One asked for a distribution rate increase but received a 9% reduction for its capital request. In 2012, Hydro One asked for a rate increase for transmission and the OEB ruled a 3% reduction for its capital request. In 2011, Toronto Hydro made a distribution request to the OEB and received about 11% less than what they requested. In 2014, Ontario Power Generation asked for a rate increase and the OEB approved half the requested amount. When they applied for a 6.2% rate increase in 2011, the OEB denied their request and, in fact, lowered the rate by 0.8%.

Over the past six months, the Ontario Energy Board has also decreased natural gas rates for Enbridge and Union Gas customers. The OEB reports that in the last six months, the typical residential customer with Enbridge Gas Distribution has seen their bills go down about \$105 per year, and Union Gas customers have seen a decrease of \$184 a year, thanks to the Ontario Energy Board.

Year after year, the OEB's mandate is to protect the interests of ratepayers, and indeed, it will continue to do so in the future. Today, we are debating Bill 112, about enhancing these powers to ensure strengthened protection for Ontario consumers, greater compliance and additional enforcement tools.

The OEB has taken important steps to put the consumer front and centre, and indeed, that is a key part of the OEB's mandate. Building on this success, Bill 112 will do more to strengthen protections for consumers.

I'd like to speak about six key areas where this legislation will increase protection for consumers and ratepayers. First, this legislation would increase the ability of the OEB to levy financial penalties on utilities, including Hydro One, that break the OEB's rules. The public rightly expects the highest standard from utilities regardless of their size or service territory, or whether they are municipally owned, privately owned or any hybrid thereof, such as Hydro One.

To that end, we are proposing increasing the cap for administrative penalties or fines, to be clear, to a maximum of \$1 million, and that's \$1 million for every single day that the contravention continues, be that a gas distribution company, a private utility, a municipal utility, or, indeed, even Hydro One is subject to those fines. This is similar to the Alberta Utilities Commission as well as the Ontario Securities Commission.

Second, the OEB will be empowered to appoint a supervisor in situations where a distributor or transmitter is unable to meet its financial obligations or reliability standards.

Third, to help streamline and clarify the ability of utilities to expand their business beyond electricity delivery, this legislation will provide greater scope to engage in

non-utility activities and to participate in the many services related to the energy sector.

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In other jurisdictions, utilities that started out strictly in the delivery of electricity have successfully expanded their interests to other services, such as renewable energy procurements, to the benefit of both their ratepayers and shareholders.

As we have seen in jurisdictions the world over, diversifying the lines of business in which a utility can participate can bring about significant value and pay sizeable cash dividends to municipal owners, for example, and that has been happening across this province already. In Ontario, many municipalities would stand to benefit from these expanded changes.

Fourth, in the busy age of social media and technological change, customers are more immediately able to offer feedback in real time. At present, the ways in which the Ontario Energy Board relates to consumer groups—residential, commercial and industrial—are locked in a rigid process designed for a different era. To support a more dynamic conversation with consumers and customer advocates, our proposed enhancements would allow the OEB to establish more interactive structures to enhance customer advocacy and representation.

I'm pleased to report that the OEB has already launched a dedicated consultation to help inform how additional consumer advocacy measures could be incorporated into a strengthened Ontario Energy Board. This would permit the ratepayers and citizens to better be able to go before the Ontario Energy Board and make a case for no increase in rates.

Fifth, the legislation before you today would give cabinet the power to designate key transmission corridors to expedite their construction. There has been fear that because of the broadening ownership of Hydro One, we would lose control over how the system itself across the province would operate. This particular amendment retains tremendous power in the province to make those planning and strategic infrastructure decisions.

Examples of such cases could be in the grid connection of Ontario's remote First Nation communities, a transmission link to the Ring of Fire; or enhanced inertia capacity with neighbouring jurisdictions to support clean energy imports. The broadening of ownership will not impact on these policy decisions that the province will continue to make in any way, shape or form.

That creates a process where the provincial government is firmly setting broad electricity and energy policy through its long-term energy plan by designating core transmission projects to ensure their construction and operation.

Electricity planning will firmly remain with the IESO—which now includes, after the merger, the Ontario Power Authority—a provincial agency, and rate-setting will remain in an enhanced Ontario Energy Board.

Sixth, and finally, we are proposing legislative amendments to strengthen consumer protection in the retail energy market. In recent years, the OEB has received

numerous complaints from customers of retailers. Mr. Speaker, you will recall the many questions that have been raised from the other side of this chamber concerning that very issue. We're taking very, very strong steps with this amendment to rectify that situation.

We know that ratepayers have voiced their concerns that some retailers have used very aggressive tactics to get homeowners, often seniors, to sign up for contracts on the spot, contracts that may not be in their long-term interests. The OEB takes these complaints very seriously, and so does our government. The proposed legislative changes to enhance consumer protection would prohibit the sale of energy retail contracts at the consumer's home while still allowing retailers and marketers to engage in appropriate marketing and advertising activities, yes, at the door, but again, not to be able to sign contracts at the door.

In addition to banning door-to-door contracts, we are also proposing to extend the cooling-off period, during which consumers can cancel a contract without penalty, from 10 days to 20 days.

These are important changes that will ensure protections for consumers are stronger and the system is more fair.

Taken together—all of these items I've reviewed—these proposed changes would strengthen the Ontario Energy Board as well as ensure that provincial public policy goals are met through enhanced and expanded legislative tools. These changes would protect ratepayers, they would strengthen the electricity system, and they would promote innovation and transformation that benefits all consumers.

But the bottom line, Mr. Speaker, is this—I'm going to read this very slowly—when the opposition tells the public that broadening the ownership of Hydro One will cause rates to go higher, that is pure and simple partisan spin. There is no basis to that statement in any way, shape or form. Rate-setting since 1960 has been done by the Ontario Energy Board. No utility—gas or electric—has had the ability to set, or as the opposition says, “skyrocket,” their own rates in any way, and that includes Hydro One in its new, broadened form.

The legislation is extremely strong. It protects the public, protects ratepayers and enables, as I said at the beginning of my remarks, billions of dollars to be invested in infrastructure without raising taxes, without borrowing money and without cutting any important programs.

I'll now cede the floor to my parliamentary assistant.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you very much, Speaker, and I thank the minister for introducing a very, very important bill, Bill 112, the Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act.

The act would, if passed, enhance the Ontario Energy Board, a board whose function, very nicely described by the minister, includes, among other things, controlling rates set by providers of both electricity and natural gas. The Ontario Energy Board is the only entity that can raise prices or change prices—and it often lowers

prices—on electricity and natural gas. As we know, our government has always stood up for electricity consumers, and we continue to be committed to putting the concerns of electricity consumers first.

Now, this is autumn, and just as happens in the springtime, as soon as the weather begins to get cold or begins to get warm, who are the first people who seem to appear at your door? It's the hawkers who are saying, “I've got a good deal”—hydro contracts, water heaters, you name it. What I'm going to address in some of my remarks are some of the concerns that I and many homeowners have with people who are saying, “I've got the greatest deal in the world, and all you've got to do is show me your utility bill and let me sign you up for this package.” The first thing you think of as a homeowner is, “This sounds like it's too good to be true.” As we've learned, if it sounds like it's too good to be true, it probably is too good to be true.

As part of this commitment, last year the Ministry of Energy asked the Ontario Energy Board to review the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010, and to report back with any recommendations about opportunities to strengthen consumer protection. The Minister of Energy underlined the government's commitment to doing all it can to protect energy consumers in light of an evolving retail energy sector, and I think this is a key point. All over the world, providing energy and the things around energy, be they the equipment or whatever, is no longer as centralized as it was when many of us grew up.

When we grew up, there was one major hydro utility. You got everything from it, and all you did at the end of the month was pay a bill. With telecommunications, broadening the services a telecom provider can offer, or narrowing them as the case may be, has actually benefited consumers because the price of telecommunications in constant dollar terms has just fallen through the floor since many of us who are baby boomers were born and raised. It used to be that the cost of making a long-distance call, relative to what you were making, was very expensive. Now, of course, it's very, very cheap. Let's talk with that perspective about some of the things that are happening in the energy sector.

As part of that review, the Ontario Energy Board consulted broadly with stakeholders from the energy sector, with consumer advocates and, of course, with consumers themselves. To reach everyday consumers, the Ontario Energy Board hosted focus groups, which are groups of about eight to as many as about 16 people, in which you have a facilitator and you sit down together, usually for the span of about an hour and a half or two hours, and the facilitator walks you through.

It would be called qualitative research, rather than quantitative, in which they ask you a question, record it and develop statistical measures. So a focus group is a qualitative exercise in which you can explore in some depth just what's on the minds of the people who you're talking with.

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To reach everyday consumers, the Ontario Energy Board did host these focus groups. It solicited input from

online workbooks and it surveyed current and former energy contract holders as well as non-contract holders. This research provided insight into consumers' opinions and experiences with retail energy contracts and with electricity retailers and gas marketers. The Ontario Energy Board also took into account complaints they received through their consumer complaints department and their own enforcement activities.

On June 1 of this year, 2015, the Ontario Energy Board released its report, which was called *Consumers Come First: A Report of the Ontario Energy Board on the Effectiveness of Part II of the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010*—a title that tells you that they didn't intend for this to be a bestseller. The report was very useful in helping to shape our government's proposed consumer protection tools.

Some of the important findings from the report include the need for better energy literacy from energy consumers and that consumers were unhappy with their experiences with aggressive door-to-door sales practices. While the Energy Consumer Protection Act provides some protection for energy consumers, one of the conclusions was that we could actually do more, and part of the research was saying, "Okay, over and above the fact that we need to do more, what does that 'more' entail?" This is the sort of thing that you can explore with a focus group.

The proposed legislation before the Legislature today would enhance the Ontario Energy Board's capabilities in several of these core areas, strengthening consumer protection in the retail energy market and facilitating the government's ability, if need be, to prioritize critical transmission infrastructure. This is an essential part of our recent efforts to evaluate and to modernize the role of the government of Ontario in the electricity sector.

I want to speak a little bit about a number of priority areas where this proposed legislation would help to strengthen protections for consumers and improve electricity oversight. The first area is that the public rightly expects the highest standards from electricity utilities, regardless of their size and regardless of their service territory. This legislation would increase the maximum level of financial penalties that the Ontario Energy Board can set against regulated companies for non-compliance with board policies.

One could have said in the past that this number, this penalty, which hadn't changed in many, many years, could be looked upon as a cost of doing business. From the standpoint of consumers, that's not what we wanted. If there was going to be a financial penalty involved for a retailer that wasn't adhering to policies and procedures, we wanted it to not only get their attention, but to take their breath away, and in fact, that's what it does.

The Ontario Energy Board would gain the ability, if necessary, to appoint a supervisor in situations where a distributor or a transmitter is unable to meet its financial obligations or reliability standards. This important measure would ensure that the public's and ratepayers' interests would be protected and would ensure continuity of service for affected communities. I also have to say that

this is not intended to alleviate a problem that one can see before us right now, but it is intended to say that at a time down the road, should a problem arise, what we don't want people to say is, "Well, didn't you think this through years ago, the last time you revised the act?" The act is being revised so that if we ever need the tools, the tools are there to solve a problem.

As well, the proposed legislation would help streamline and clarify the ability of local distribution companies—such as, in Mississauga, our very own Enersource, a very well-run company—to expand their business beyond electricity delivery. The proposed legislation here would provide local distribution companies with the ability to seek approval from the Ontario Energy Board to engage in non-utility activities and to participate in the many innovations in the electricity sector while ensuring that ratepayers are not adversely affected.

What this means, for example—and I'm going to give you a personal one from the vantage point of being a weekend software coder. I was speaking with some of my colleagues in one of the support programs that I was involved in in the 1990s and in the last decade. In an online group somebody was saying, "Well, you know, it seems that all of the really good applications have been done. Does anybody have an idea for a proposed new app?" What I said was, "Why don't you work with the various utility companies in North America and come up with something that allows the connection to an exposed application program interface from a utility that would give consumers the ability to know how they are managing their energy usage?" So that lit up the discussion group, and everybody thought that that was a great idea.

One of the next issues they raised was: How do you go about it? This means, from the vantage point of the local distribution company, if they wish to work with the software provider—and this is not a core activity of the local distribution company, but it does mean that the legislation makes it very clear that the business practices are not restrictive, it allows them to open their minds, to be creative and to make the experience with their customers that much better.

As well the legislation before the House would give cabinet enhanced powers to designate key transmission projects and help expedite their construction to support important public policy goals like the connection of off-grid, remote communities. In specific terms, if there would be, for example, an ore deposit or the development of a natural resource area, in which the province said that, clearly, we are going to build an entire town here. One of the problems was, if you are going to build an entire town, how do you get electricity into the town? If there is an obvious transmission corridor, it's difficult enough as it is because, particularly in the north, you're dealing with a whole host of other parties that you have to work with, including First Nations. What this would do is give cabinet the enhanced powers to say that this is a key transmission project and this transmission project is going to be essential to the development of such-and-such project, so we need to get it going.

As well, it strengthens consumer protection in the retail energy market, something that I mentioned earlier. Many members of this House have had experiences similar to mine where you have taken a call at the constituency office and someone has said, "Well, they came to my door, they were such nice people and they asked for my utility bill. Now I find that I have got a contract with these people. How do I get out of it?" I said, "Well, if they had asked for your bank book, would you have shown them your bank book? Would you have given them the PIN to your credit card?" "Well, no, of course I wouldn't." "Well, why did you give them your utility bill?" What we also have to do, in addition to strengthening some of the measures available in protecting consumers, is—as the focus groups pointed out—enhance Ontario's ability to provide some consumer education.

I've had some of the energy hawkers come to my house and say, "We're here because the government is forcing us to do this." So I let them continue for a little while. I remember on one occasion I had just gotten home from work. I had my legislative pass, I pulled it out and said, "See this? I am the government. What exactly am I forcing you to do? Or maybe we should call the police and just wait for them." The guy just took off into the night.

We know that ratepayers have voiced their concerns that retailers have used this kind of very aggressive tactic. This proposed legislation would include some changes to enhance consumer protection that would prohibit the sale of energy retail contracts at the consumer's home—prohibit it. There are no weasel words in there. It would prohibit it. It also expands the cooling-off period for new contracts.

As we move toward an increasingly, shall we use the word "transformative" time in the electricity sector, our government knows that these changes are going to provide a strong regulator with enhanced powers to protect consumers.

These are some of the changes that would strengthen our electricity system, would promote innovation, and some of the transformations that are going to strengthen all consumers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm very pleased to have this opportunity this morning to respond to the speech by the Minister of Energy and the member from Mississauga, who just presented leadoff speeches for the government on Bill 112, Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act.

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We certainly know that there are very high hydro rates in Ontario today, probably the highest in North America. The minister, in his statement, indicated that the Ontario Energy Board sets the rates. That's not really the whole story, Mr. Speaker. It oversimplifies things, I think. In fact, the local distribution companies, in some cases, as well as Hydro One, actually make the request for the rate increases. The minister mentioned that there have been

some that have been turned down by the Ontario Energy Board, but I believe it's true that the vast majority of the rate increase requests are, in fact, granted by the Ontario Energy Board and have been in the past.

Certainly, it's a very expensive and time-consuming process. I hear from the local distribution companies in my riding, and they don't just put together an application on the back of a napkin; they have to detail it and it's very expensive for them. I think in many cases their requests are in fact granted by the government.

It's also a statement from the minister this morning, and it was said yesterday by the Premier, that the rates will not rise as a result of the Hydro One sale. Certainly, there's no one on this side of the House who believes that, Mr. Speaker. We know that time will tell, but I'm certainly prepared to submit to you today my belief that hydro rates will continue to rise in the province of Ontario, and it will be shown over time that, in fact, those rate increases, to some degree, are because of the privatization of Hydro One and the sale of shares in Hydro One.

I'm looking forward to the speech this morning by our critic, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, who does an outstanding job as our energy critic. Our caucus will certainly vigorously debate this bill and we look forward to that debate and look forward to hearing from the people of Ontario at the committee stage.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the speeches by the minister and his parliamentary assistant.

This bill before us is going to substantially change the ability of the Ontario Energy Board to review transmission projects in this province. It is a very large loophole in the regulatory regime that should be in place in Ontario.

I note that in the past the Ontario Energy Board was bypassed when the Liberals brought forward the smart meter program. That program was not assessed from the beginning; there was no business case that was presented to the Ontario Energy Board. In fact, the Ontario Energy Board was directed to facilitate the implementation of the smart meter program rather than to review its business case or review its impact on the system. This bill continues this tradition of bypassing the regulator so the government can make whatever decision it wants on electricity policy in this province.

The OEB is required to review and approve private sales of transmission companies to make sure they're in the public interest. Just yesterday, the Liberal caucus voted against a resolution by our party to send the sale of Hydro One to the OEB for review. That sale has not had public consultation and has not had the release of documents to allow anyone in this province to assess, really, what the implications are for Ontarians and their electricity system.

Speaker, to further undermine the regulatory regime in Ontario to benefit the new private owners of Hydro One

is a dereliction of duty on the part of this government. It says to the public, "The OEB will protect you," and in the next breath they make sure that it can't do its job.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

Mr. Grant Crack: It's a pleasure for me to stand today and speak to Bill 112. I just want to follow up on some comments made by Minister Chiarelli when he did his opening remarks with regard to the Ontario Energy Board.

I think everyone in the House can recall when gas prices rose significantly about two years ago throughout the winter. Our office was inundated with phone calls. People were concerned: "What's happening? What is the government going to do?" My response was that rates are controlled by the Ontario Energy Board. They're a very competent agency of the government. They regulate. They take a look at a lot of the different components of both energy and electricity systems and they set fair rates.

As the minister also alluded to, in the last six months, Union Gas rates have gone down on average just over \$100 per year—that was Enbridge gas. Union Gas is about \$180 per year.

They do their job, and I'm confident that they can do the same thing with regard to Hydro One. They've been doing a great job over the years in controlling the rates and minimizing the increases that are being requested by Hydro One. To me, this shows that the OEB is an effective regulator in the province of Ontario. We can look forward, as we continue to broaden the ownership, that they will take a look at all aspects of the electricity system—transmission and distribution—and set the rates that are fair for Ontario as we move forward.

Another component of this bill that I like is the fact that as we continue to strengthen consumer protection, we're going to prohibit electricity retailers and gas marketers from going door to door. I know a number of people who have been in a situation where they've agreed to enter into a contract and have regretted it later.

This is a great piece of legislation. I congratulate the minister for putting this forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm honoured to rise for a couple of minutes to talk about Bill 112, the Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act.

I listened to the Minister of Energy and his parliamentary assistant, the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, as well as comments from the honourable member from Wellington–Halton Hills this morning. I'm looking forward to hearing what our energy critic is going to talk about when he speaks on the lead on behalf of our caucus.

I just wanted to raise a couple of points and get on the record two big issues that I'm hearing about in my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. One is the overwhelming and strong opposition to the Hydro One fire sale. I think

that everybody in the province of Ontario knows that this is going to result in expensive energy costs and higher electricity bills.

Most members will have heard the news now of what happened with Windsor's Valiant, a company down in Windsor that, yesterday morning, unfortunately announced that they're going to expand in Michigan and will be creating 223 jobs in Michigan.

The problem is the fact that we have to get our economic fundamentals right in the province, and that begins with getting electricity costs under control. I just don't trust where this government is going. I don't think Bill 112 is going to do anything to create investment in Ontario and to lower electricity costs, or at least get them under control.

The last thing I'd like to mention, and it wasn't discussed this morning by the minister, is the further development of wind turbines. In my riding, another three or four projects are set to be built, driving up electricity prices even more.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member from Mississauga–Streetsville for a two-minute response.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I acknowledge the comments from the members for Wellington–Halton Hills, Toronto–Danforth, Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and Lambton–Kent–Middlesex.

Some of the members seemed to talk about everything except what's in the bill, so there are a couple of things that I think we need to enhance.

One of the strong points of this bill is to make retailer prices more transparent and clear for consumers, something that I touched on in my remarks and I'd just like to underline. Currently, only the government has the ability to prescribe specific pricing requirements that retailers and marketers must follow. Our proposed enhancements in this bill would ensure that the government and the Ontario Energy Board are authorized to prescribe specific requirements that retailers and marketers must follow when determining the prices that they offer. Once again, it just says that all of this nonsense that we hear about, the fact that hydro prices are just going to spiral out of control, is completely baseless. The entity that sets prices is the Ontario Energy Board. In my remarks yesterday, I went through a number of instances in which the OEB had taken applied-for energy rate increases and simply rolled them back. If the energy rate increases are not justified, they get rolled back. In fact, among the things I quoted yesterday were decisions by the Ontario Energy Board that resulted in rate decreases.

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One of the things about the Ontario Energy Board, whose powers are being increased substantially in this act, is that the Ontario Energy Board is an agency with teeth. It can get the job done. It has, for more than 50 years, and it will continue to do so.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's my pleasure to join the debate on Bill 112. I want to start by pointing out to the

member from Mississauga–Streetsville that the minister barely talked about the bill in his leadoff, so let's not get into that silliness here this morning.

I wondered why the minister didn't talk about the bill very much. To coin the phrase that I hear from the other side all the time: Did you have the opportunity to read it? Perhaps he hasn't read the bill, because he was so fixated on the Hydro One sale. This makes me ask the question: Is the minister so taken by the opposition to the Hydro One sale that he is consumed by that? Is he so worried about how that is going over in the province of Ontario that he used his leadoff time to talk about the Hydro One sale?

Everyone knows what's happening out there with the Hydro One sale and how the people are opposed to it and the polling that has told the government they're not doing it right. Ever since they announced the Hydro One sale, there has been poll after poll after poll, and every time, the number of people opposing the sale actually goes up, which, as I said yesterday, tells you one of two things, or maybe both: Either the government is doing a very poor job of selling it, or maybe it's just the wrong thing to do, or perhaps it's both. I think it's both.

Then the minister talked about how the opposition is—what did he say? I'll paraphrase it. He said, "I'm going to say this slowly, so they understand"—

Interjection: Unmitigated partisan spin.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Unmitigated partisan spin, is how he described it. Well, I can tell you, Speaker, if the opposition is guilty of spin, then relatively speaking, the minister is the conductor of the carousel. He's at the midway, and he's running the merry-go-round. I'm here to tell you, if you want to talk about spin, there is the spin master, right over there in the Minister of Energy's seat, because everything that you're getting out of them is spin.

I got a kick out of it when the prospectus was released last week and he said that yes, the new CEO of Hydro One is going to be paid \$815,000 as a base salary, but he's eligible to be making up to \$4 million. But the minister said those are going to be tough—I'm paraphrasing, of course—yardsticks to make, and he's going to have to really do a great job in order to earn those bonuses. As I said yesterday, it's sort of like Saad Rafi had to do a great job to earn those bonuses at the Pan American Games. Right. This guy is going to make \$4 million. You can take that to the bank, because he's certainly going to be taking it to the bank, let me assure you of that.

Anyway, then the minister wants to talk about, and the PA wanted to talk about the OEB and how this is this great protective agency, that nothing slips by it, and their number one mandate and the only reason they exist is to protect the consumer. In the act, that's exactly what the OEB is expected to do, and in theory, they do that. My friend from Wellington–Halton Hills gave a little dose of reality when he was speaking. He talked about the reality of when an application comes before the OEB.

By the way, the minister was talking about how the OEB has lowered gas prices. Well, the gas distributors

actually made an application to lower gas prices because the market has changed. They make applications to raise prices when the market forces them to do so, and they make applications to lower them when the market allows them to do so. This is not about Union or Enbridge trying to profit while the market brings the price of gas down. You remember a couple of winters ago, when the price just went crazy because of a supply issue and the ability to move it through the pipelines? They had to look for price increases, so there were price increases approved by the Ontario Energy Board.

They're also now looking at reducing those prices on a consistent basis to reflect the changes in their costs, which brings us to the actual way the Ontario Energy Board works. The minister says, "The Ontario Energy Board works in a vacuum, where it just decides that rates go up or rates go down." That's just poppycock, and he knows that. The energy board doesn't raise the rates or lower the rates. It works on the information that is presented to it. But that information so much relies on what is happening in the marketplace, and the biggest impact in the marketplace—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Education, come to order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The biggest impact in the marketplace when it comes to electricity generation in the province of Ontario is government policy. That's the biggest determinant in the marketplace in electricity in the province of Ontario: government policy.

Is the minister going to tell me that the Ontario Energy Board on its own has tripled electricity rates since the Liberals came to power? Not at all. The Ontario Energy Board is not interested in dipping into your pocket and tripling energy rates. I don't think the member for Timmins–James Bay would believe that, or the member from Toronto–Danforth: that the Ontario Energy Board is going to be the entity that says, "Hey, we have to get some more money for those energy companies, so over the 12 years that the Liberals are in power, we're going to triple electricity prices." No, no, no. That's not how it works. What happens is, it's what the government is doing and the policies that they're implementing, such as the now infamous Green Energy Act and the windmills proliferating all across this province.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: It has nothing to do with broadening ownership.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, now he wants to talk about broadening—he has forgotten about the Green Energy Act already. He has forgotten about the tripling of electricity prices.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister of Energy, would you please come to order?

Mr. John Yakabuski: The only thing he wants to talk about is Hydro One.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would just remind the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pem-

broke: I've been very lenient; it's now seven minutes and I would like you tie it back to the bill.

Mr. John Yakabuski: And we're talking about the Ontario Energy Board, which this bill is exactly about.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): And that's what I'm asking you to do.

Mr. John Yakabuski: And that's exactly what I'm doing: talking about determining electricity rates. I'm responding also to the minister's speech. If I can't respond to the minister's speech, the head of the electricity system in Ontario, then what am I here for?

Mr. Bob Delaney: We've asked that for 12 years.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Bad question.

The Ontario Energy Board relies on the information that it is presented to them. So now, for all of these years—you remember when what they called the—the Liberals changed the name. I don't know if they had to go through the ministry of—who looks after birth certificates, the registrar general. I don't know if they had to apply for a name change. I know that if someone wants to change their name, they have to apply for it. But the government, just all of a sudden, changed the name from what used to be called the provincial benefit—a nice name: provincial benefit. It must mean a good thing. They decided that that just wasn't flying very well so they called it the global adjustment. They changed it to the global adjustment because, boy, if you want to talk about getting dinged. That global adjustment—wait until November, and I say this to the minister: With all of the electricity—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would say to all members on the government side: When your members were speaking, this side of the House was quiet and listened, so I would ask you to do the same.

Carry on, and keep it to the bill as much as you can.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I most certainly will, Speaker, and I appreciate your admonishment of the government side. I do my best, when they're speaking, to hold my comments till later.

Back to the setting of those prices: This bill, Bill 112, is all about consumer protection. I want to tell the minister, straight out, that there's a lot in this bill that we like. We are going to be looking for amendments, because this government gets caught up in its philosophy, and it just wants to be—well, you know what they used to call former Premier Dalton McGuinty? The nanny state Premier. They haven't forgotten that. In some ways, they've actually expanded on that.

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So sometimes they take things a little too far. I'm told that people in the ministry have also looked at this bill and said, "Maybe we need to reflect on it a little bit more." Maybe the minister would like to talk about that. He didn't talk about it in his speech today because he never really talked about the bill, but maybe they are looking at some amendments that could make this bill a little bit better and a little bit more realistic. I will talk about that as well.

But for right now, we're trying to respond a little bit to his definition of what the Ontario Energy Board actually does. It was a fair bit of spin. I've got a great deal of respect for the minister, but sometimes he can't help himself, because what the Liberals do is they tell you everything that they want you to know and they conveniently miss some of the things that they don't want you to know.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Careful; you're right on the border of 23(i).

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, and I would never question his motives for that. No, no, no, Mr. 23(i) over there. I would never question his motives. As I said, he just can't help himself. He can't help himself. Maybe he just forgets to tell the other side of the story.

Do you remember that guy who used to do the radio shows on CBS? It was called *The Rest of the Story*. That's what we need whenever a Liberal minister has a speech in the House. Whenever a Liberal minister speaks in this chamber, there should be that—I can't think of his name now. But they should then have the addition of that guy—he's probably too old now—come on and then, as he would finish his little talk, he would say, "And now you know the rest of the story." So I'm taking that role on a little bit myself today, Speaker, and I appreciate the indulgence on the part of the government, that I am going to try to tell the rest of the story when it comes to the OEB.

Over this 12-year period, there have been multiple applications for increases. To the member for Mississauga—Streetsville who gets up and sanctimoniously says, "They roll back requests." Well, it's kind of a negotiation process, where you know that if you go in and say you need 3%—you've had your meeting with your shareholders and your analysis and your engineers and your accountants and everybody else, and you say, "Folks, this is what we've invested in, new this or new that or whatever, and if we're going to survive, we need 3%." Then the negotiator side of it, they're going to say, "Don't go to the OEB and ask for 3%," because you know there's a lot of pressure on them to make it look like they are doing their job and they are going to roll that back. So don't go to the OEB and say, "We need 3%." You're going to have to go to the OEB and say, "Look, we've cut this as tight as we can. We're down to the bone. We need 4.5%." And then, after long, tough discussions at the OEB and all of the accountants milling together and analyzing all of the data, they say, "No, we're going to roll that back. You're going to get 3%." And the minister gets up, probably, in the House to say, "The OEB once again protected consumers by rolling back that application of 4.5%, and they're protecting consumers." Fine and dandy; I guess we'll just have to accept that.

But to imply that the OEB on its own sets rates is just not the case. The OEB takes the information—if a person, an entity, a company, a utility, whatever, can show that their costs have increased, and they have the data to prove it, then the OEB has no option but to allow that

rate increase to happen. That's what has happened over the last 12 years here in the province of Ontario as a result of the Green Energy Act, as a result of giving away electricity. In June alone—in June alone—we gave away \$224 million worth of electricity to other jurisdictions. In June alone, we gave away—the net value was \$224 million.

Mr. Bob Delaney: What did they give us? Tell us how much they gave us.

Mr. John Yakubuski: I say, to 23(b)(i) over there: They gave away \$224 million in June alone.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): You should continue to speak through the Chair and not worry about the side comments.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Sorry; okay. In June alone. When those kinds of numbers get all bunched together—and this is what is happening. If you think that that's not going to have an impact on November 1—I'd like to ask the minister. Because of the wonderful management of the Wynne government on the electricity file and the electricity we've been giving away and the contracts we continue to sign, I think we can probably expect, maybe, a rollback in electricity rates on November 1. Is that what's going to happen? He's not nodding. He's not acknowledging me.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: You're telling me Hydro One doesn't set their own rates.

Mr. John Yakubuski: No, but they have their costs that they have to recover, and they have been driven by your government.

I don't blame the minister; he wasn't the minister in 2009, when they came up with that insanity, the Green Energy Act. They never, ever thought about what the impacts would be.

We had a study done at that time by a very reputable firm—worldwide—called London Economics International. They told us point blank that this was going to cost \$40 billion. I'll say that slow: \$40 billion. You know what? London Economics was wrong. They underestimated, as we know now from the Auditor General, who has analyzed the data. The Auditor General of this province right here has analyzed the data and has shown that, between 2006 and 2015—and we're here; in fact, 2015 is three quarters over—the Green Energy Act and the global adjustment will have cost Ontario's electricity consumers not \$40 billion but \$50 billion—\$50 billion.

Those are the facts, and no one over there is disputing it. So how can you have a \$50-billion expense and not increase electricity bills? That's what the OEB has had to work with. The Ontario Energy Board can't ignore that \$50-billion figure. So every time something happens, when the government relocates a gas plant—or, while we're at it, folks, why not relocate two, at \$1.1 billion? That goes on your electricity bill. Yes, it's spread out over a 20-year period, but it still goes on your electricity bill—\$1.1 billion. Thank you very much to the Liberal government.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A point of order.

Mr. Bob Delaney: According to standing order 23(b)(i), and despite having lost two elections over this issue, the member continues to refer to a decision already taken by the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, of which he was a member, that was tabled in this Legislature back in February of this year that concluded in 2014 and that has no bearing on the discussion of this bill.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I take your point of order, but I would remind the member that I listen to both sides.

I would ask the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to continue, but please try to tie it in to this piece of legislation that is in front of us.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Thank you very much, Speaker. We're tying it in very closely, as I'm sure you have observed.

Whatever he's come up with there, I have no idea what he is talking about. I was never a member of that committee. I might have been subbed in on it. But first of all, at no time did it ever imply that we can no longer debate the issue in this House: "Oh, I'm sorry. You can't talk about it anymore."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, I'd ask you to speak to the bill in front of us.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Yes. I most certainly want to, because there's much to talk about.

But as I said, Speaker, I wanted to make sure that we talked about the role of the OEB in this debate, prior to losing that conversation, because the minister invited us to by bringing up the subject himself. Out of respect, I want to make sure that the minister has the benefit of our response as well. We would not want to have the minister make a statement and not respond to it. That would be, in my opinion, disrespectful of the minister, and I would not do that. I want to make sure that he has the benefit of my response as his critic.

If there's more that the minister wants from me on this, I'm sure we can speak about it offline and go into it more deeply. But you know me, Minister. I'm always there to help.

So let's talk—I may come back to this if I feel there's something new that I needed to add, but—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I hope you do it soon.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Well, I have a lot of time. Oh, you want to hear it right away? Well, there are times that the best thing one can do, Speaker, is keep them wanting.

So let's talk a little bit about Bill 112. I didn't hear a lot from the minister about Bill 112, so I'm not directly responding, but I am trying to offer some constructive criticism, which is what I think, generally speaking, I do in this chamber, try to offer constructive criticism.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Well.

Mr. John Yakubuski: I appreciate the Minister of Agriculture coming over for a closer look.

Bill 112: There are a couple of things. The motive behind this, and I'm watching for 23(i) or (b), whatever—

he can have the whole alphabet if he wants to jump up. But the motive behind this is a good one. He probably won't object at this point. The motive behind it is a good one, because what we're talking about here is consumer protection. If the government can't protect the consumers, then who can? In the same vein, I say there is an old saying, "caveat emptor," let the buyer beware: We have to ensure that the consumers protect themselves as well.

The genesis of all of this stuff when it comes to electricity contracts goes back several years. I believe David Ramsay actually had a private member's bill dealing with this when he was a member here, and then I believe it was Gerry Phillips who was the energy minister when we brought in some of the first protective, restrictive legislation when it came to door-to-door energy retailers. I'm sure everybody here would remember that Marketplace exposé where they caught on camera clearly unscrupulous door-to-door energy salespersons misleading the public about how they would benefit by signing a retail energy contract.

So the motive was good and the results, I think, were good because much of that problem has dissipated here across the province of Ontario. The consumers have been educated, but also the regulations have made it—and let me be clear, too: The industry itself was very supportive of the changes, because they saw what happened when an unscrupulous salesperson would decide, on their own, to mislead the potential client.

I can't tell you how many of these contracts over my time here as the MPP for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke—and particularly probably because I've been the energy critic for a good number of years as well—I've been able to extract people from. I have so many I could talk about, but I'd like to just talk about one for the time being: my mother-in-law.

My mother-in-law was born in Lithuania. She was displaced during the Second World War. They moved to Germany. They were ethnic Germans living in Lithuania; during the war, they fled back to Germany. In 1954, she came to Canada with my wife, who was then her year-old daughter.

My mother-in-law never spoke English. She didn't have an education. She is now 82—

Hon. Jeff Leal: A delightful lady.

Mr. John Yakubuski: She is a delightful lady, and one of the hardest-working people you'll ever meet in your life.

Interjection: Proud of her son-in-law.

Mr. John Yakubuski: I hope so.

She was visited by a door-to-door representative from an energy retailer several years back, and signed onto one of these energy contracts. Then her bills went up significantly.

Now Elma—her name is Elma Schmidt, or Smith; they've anglicized everything—never told me that she had signed this contract. She was probably embarrassed because she felt that she should have known better. But after she was involved in it for several months, I think my wife's sister Rose found out about it and she talked to me.

To make a long story short, we got her out of the contract—and it was a bad one, but the most egregious part of it was how my mother-in-law, who is not educated, was not dealt with honestly in how she was approached about signing that contract. That was probably the most important part of it when it came down to getting her released from that contract.

But that was not uncommon. One of the challenges was that these took place at the door, and they would get you to sign it right away. What this bill does is it says, "You're not going to be able to sell an electricity contract at the door." No door-to-door sales on electricity contracts—I should say energy contracts; not just electricity, but energy contracts—and that's a good thing, and the industry itself accepts that it's a good thing. By not allowing the sale of these contracts at the door, we accomplish a lot. We remove the biggest problem, which was misleading information, getting people to sign immediately at the door. By not allowing the contract to be sold at the door, that will accomplish the greatest benefit and the greatest good for consumers across Ontario.

Having talked to people in the industry, they're good with that; they're okay with that. They recognize that that was a challenge for them as well as the consumer when there was too much possibility of high-pressure sales and the wrong people—in the case of the consumer, possibly the wrong people.

In reality, my mother-in-law was not a person who had any great degree of schooling and was not completely conversant in the English language, but it's amazing how many people with energy contracts I've dealt with have been to university for many years as well. So it's not just a lesser-educated person, but also those who are well educated who have signed these contracts as well. We remove that by taking away the door-to-door sales. That accomplishes a lot.

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But now, some of these same companies have also invested a lot of money in offering other products—it doesn't have to be door to door; they can be online, they can be voluntary; you have to go to their website or whatever—such things as high-tech thermostats that allow someone to reduce their energy usage and thereby, even in Liberal Ontario, where the price has gone up three times, allow you to reduce your energy costs because you have a more efficiently operating energy system within your home. That's something that someone would voluntarily want to purchase. It could be some software, it could be a high-tech thermostat or whatever. But under this bill, even though it's something I seek out on my own or I want to purchase, I would not be allowed to purchase that for 20 days. The cooling-off period of 20 days, I think as a blanket measure, is excessive. That needs to be looked at and dealt with by amendment by the government. I understand that people in the ministry have also felt that perhaps that's something that needs to be looked at.

I hope the government actually does some of these things on a realistic basis and not just try to portray them-

selves as the great protector, because most people in Ontario believe that they're not the great protector. They are, as the Platters would say, the great pretender. Don't pretend you're the protector by overstretching it. Actually do the things that are necessary to protect the consumer, but don't exaggerate how you feel about this. That's always the challenge for government to get it right. I hoped that they would have got this right before they tabled the bill, but there is still that opportunity when we go for amendments after second reading. We're looking forward to that as well.

The other thing that is a challenge—and as they say, let's put this into perspective: We removed door-to-door sales. But in the case of selling products, they also want to say you cannot pay an agent a commission for selling a product. My wife is a commissioned salesperson selling real estate. If she sells a house for X number of dollars—well, let's just make easy numbers. If she sold a house for \$200,000, she would get X amount of commission. If she sold that same house for \$190,000, she would get less commission. If she sold it for \$210,000, she would get more commission.

If someone selling energy-efficient conservation or whatever product is simply going to be sent out there to sell products, but you're just on a salary, then the low achiever is going to be paid at the same rate as the high achiever. Do you think people who work in the securities exchange, in the Toronto Stock Exchange, don't work on commission? Do you think the person selling you your car doesn't work on commission? This is how we incentivize the best performance. To simply say that because there has been a problem—and we acknowledge there's been a terrible problem in the sale of energy contracts. But to simply say because there has been a problem, we should eliminate the ability of one person to honestly work harder to get ahead, that's not the Canadian way. That's not how we work.

We have to really ask ourselves: Are we overreaching by trying to achieve a goal—that we're actually hurting the consumer because we may not have the best salespeople out there? If you're a top salesperson, you know your products. You work hard to understand—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you very much.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30 a.m.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Il me fait plaisir aujourd'hui de vous présenter deux invités : le président de l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario, Denis Vaillancourt, qui est ici avec nous, et le directeur général, Peter Hominuk. Ils sont venus nous rencontrer, la première ministre et moi, aujourd'hui pour discuter de beaux dossiers francophones. Merci d'être ici.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'd like to introduce, in the gallery, Atikokan's Mayor Dennis Brown, former Timmins mayor Jamie Lim, former chief Georjann Morriseau and Christine Leduc from the OFIA, who are here for the anti-SLAPP legislation.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I am extremely proud to introduce Rick Bertrand, who is the president of United Steelworkers Local 6500 in my riding, and who is here in support of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act that we will be debating this afternoon.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Please help me welcome the parents of our page Kelly Hu: her mother, Feng Hu, and her father, Eddie Hu. Her brother Alex was a page here just two years ago.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to introduce John and Shirley Reaburn, owners of Carson's Camp in Sauble Beach, and Paul and Kathy Walker, partners in Walker-Bumstead Financial and my favourite cousins. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to introduce some people in the members' gallery. They are OPSEU health professional members from CarePartners in Norfolk and Niagara: Erin Warman, Julie Reid, Laurie Filson, Angela DiPietro, Karen Goldhawk, Perry Wong, Pat MacLaren, Nellie Wolff, Patricia Fowler, Beverly Haden and Marian Landry. Welcome to Queen's Park.

We also have page Alex Wang's mother and father here today: Meng Wang and Pike Wang. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to give a warm Queen's Park welcome to Mr. Jeff Mole from the Community Enterprise Network, who has joined us in the members' gallery today.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'd like to welcome in the west members' gallery today, from the University of Toronto, Michael Da Silva and Nicolas Buhite, who are here visiting today. Welcome.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to invite all members to join me in wishing our Minister of Energy a very happy birthday.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise to welcome a number of my constituents from the great riding of Oxford. As I explained yesterday, they are here today to raise awareness that the proposed landfill site in Oxford would put our drinking water at risk.

I don't believe they're in the gallery yet, but we want to welcome the mayor of Ingersoll, Ted Comiskey; and Bryan Smith; Mike and Emma Farlow; Bonnie and Neil Dennison; Bonnie Hartley; Sarah, Aleksandr and Suzanne Crellin; Christina Crawford; Wayne Walden; Glen Sauder; Leo Walsh; Reed Elliott; Deb Tait; Derek Verveer; and John and Yetty Joosse. I want to welcome them all here and thank them for all their hard work.

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Il me fait un très grand plaisir de présenter aujourd'hui notre invitée spéciale au caucus de la francophonie : M^{me} Élisabeth Allard,

présidente de la Fédération des aînés et des retraités francophones de l'Ontario.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Joining us in the Legislature today are Susan Kitchen, Barrie Shepley, Mercedes Watson, Jeremy Cross, Stuart McLaren, Eric Belahov, Clarissa Oleksiuk and Brooke Rosenfeld, who are coaches representing many different sports here in Ontario. Let's give them a big round of applause.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: There are a number of guests here from the great riding of Northumberland–Quinte West, showcasing what the riding has to offer. I hope everybody has an opportunity to attend rooms 228 and 230 for some refreshments between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I introduced the whole group earlier—I see that the mayor of Ingersoll is in the gallery now. Ted Comiskey, welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery a parliamentary delegation from the Health Services Committee of the Nairobi County Assembly of the Republic of Kenya. Please welcome our guests in a warm way.

Remarks in Swahili.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That was another language, in case you didn't know: Swahili.

JOUR DES FRANCO-ONTARIENS ET DES FRANCO-ONTARIENNES

FRANCO-ONTARIAN DAY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Attorney General on a point of order.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Monsieur le Président, je crois que vous constaterez que nous avons le consentement unanime pour marquer le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes, ainsi que le 400^e anniversaire de la présence française en Ontario. Un représentant ou une représentante de chaque groupe parlementaire prendra la parole pendant une période maximale de cinq minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Attorney General is seeking unanimous consent to pay tribute to marking Franco-Ontarian Day and the 400th anniversary of francophone presence in Ontario, with representatives from each caucus speaking for up to five minutes. Do we agree? Oui. Merci beaucoup.

Attorney General.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in this assembly for the sixth consecutive year to mark Franco-Ontarian Day, which we are celebrating tomorrow on September 25.

Dear colleagues, it is a symbolic day, of course, but above all, it is Ontario's official recognition of the fundamental contribution made by the province's francophones to its economic, social and cultural prosperity.

Demain revêt une signification toute particulière. Comme vous le savez, nous célébrons, en 2015, 400 ans de présence française en Ontario. C'était en 1615 que le grand explorateur Samuel de Champlain a voyagé dans

une région désormais appelée l'Ontario. L'arrivée de Champlain a permis aux premiers Européens de s'installer en Huronie. Champlain, grand diplomate, avait pour rêve de bâtir des amitiés fondées sur la confiance et le respect mutuel avec les communautés des Premières Nations.

Today, 400 years later, as a community we are proud of who we are. We take responsibility for our institutions and we know how to persevere. We have every reason to celebrate the advancement of Ontario's francophonie.

Monsieur le Président, je vous assure que nous célébrons en grand. Je pense à la grande série télévisée *Le Rêve de Champlain* de TFO, qui vient d'ailleurs de recevoir un prix Géméaux, et je les félicite. Je pense au nouveau parc commémoratif à Penetang et à la grande reconstitution historique de l'arrivée de Champlain—un événement spectaculaire. Je pense aussi aux 62 projets locaux et régionaux que nous avons financés, à l'édition spéciale de la Franco-Fête de Toronto et à la vitrine incroyable qu'elle a conférée au 400^e dans le cadre des jeux Pan Am, ainsi qu'à l'édition spéciale du Festival franco-ontarien à Ottawa.

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À l'occasion du 400^e anniversaire, l'Ontario a aussi été l'hôte de la 20^e Conférence ministérielle sur la francophonie canadienne, a conclu un important partenariat avec le Musée royal de l'Ontario, et a aussi dévoilé une pièce de monnaie commémorative en collaboration avec la Monnaie royale canadienne. Et ce n'est pas encore terminé, monsieur le Président.

Today, more than 600,000 francophones call Ontario home. This year, all of them are celebrating. But as I always say, the 400th anniversary celebrations are not only for Franco-Ontarians; they are for the entire province, which is why I invite all members to join in for the last few months of celebration.

J'invite tous ceux qui sont disponibles ici et à Toronto à venir demain à 16 h 30, avec la première ministre, là où le drapeau franco-ontarien sera hissé en avant de l'Assemblée législative. Alors, je vous invite, monsieur le Président, et je vous souhaite à tous et à toutes un joyeux Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes. Merci.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci. Further comments?

M^{me} Gila Martow: Merci, monsieur le Président. Cette année marque le 400^e anniversaire de la découverte de l'Ontario par l'explorateur français Samuel de Champlain. En 1615, Samuel de Champlain avait voyagé en Huronie sur la rive sud de la baie Georgienne du lac Huron. Champlain a voyagé en canot et a rencontré plusieurs nations. Une fois en Huronie, il a passé un mois à voyager dans les nombreux villages de la région. Les historiens aujourd'hui considèrent que Champlain était un homme d'État et un leader avec une vision. L'approche qu'il a faite dans ses relations avec les Premières Nations avait continué, et grâce à lui, nous avons plus de 600 000 francophones qui vivent dans la province de l'Ontario aujourd'hui.

Comme la députée provinciale de Thornhill et porte-parole des affaires francophones, j'ai organisé, à la dernière Exposition nationale canadienne, une journée commémorative pour célébrer cette étape importante. La Journée francophone à l'Exposition nationale canadienne a été organisée en collaboration avec les organisateurs du comité du 400^e et des membres de l'Exposition nationale canadienne.

En utilisant le #Champlain1615 et d'autres outils de médias sociaux, le comité du 400^e a créé un kiosque vidéo fantastique. Ce kiosque vidéo a pris part dans plusieurs festivals à travers la province de l'Ontario cet été. Des francophones, et bien sûr des francophiles, ont été invités à prendre part à un simulateur de canot qui les a emmenés dans un voyage tout comme Samuel de Champlain a fait en 1615.

Alain Beaudoin, le président de l'Association des francophones de la région de York, nous a rejoints pour la Journée francophone à la CNE. Ensemble, nous avons beaucoup apprécié la performance incroyable de l'artiste française, Mélanie Brulée.

J'espère que beaucoup d'entre vous se rappellent du nom Maxime Brinck-Croteau, athlète d'escrime des Jeux panaméricains de 2015. Maxime, un francophone de la ville de Markham, a promu son école d'escrime avec son collègue qui a porté un costume de Samuel de Champlain—si amusant!

Comme la porte-parole du PC aux affaires francophones, je tiens à reconnaître et féliciter l'Assemblée de la francophonie pour leur énorme travail dans la promotion de la culture française et de langue française, et pour veiller à ce que les questions francophones de la province ne soient pas ignorées. Pour le président de l'AFO, Denis Vaillancourt, qui est ici aujourd'hui, et au directeur exécutif, Peter Hominuk, aussi ici aujourd'hui, et tout le personnel, je vous remercie pour le travail que vous faites pour tous les francophones à travers la province.

Je tiens également à féliciter notre parti pour l'énorme travail accompli en 2013 pour avoir le projet de loi 106 adopté à l'unanimité ici dans cette législature. Comme vous le savez, le projet de loi 106 donne au commissaire aux services en français le droit de faire rapport à l'Assemblée législative, ce qui offre une meilleure transparence—quelque chose de très important pour les francophones à travers la province de l'Ontario.

J'ai hâte de célébrer la journée francophone ici à Queen's Park avec la cérémonie de lever du drapeau demain. Je souhaite à tous les Franco-Ontariens un merveilleux 400^e anniversaire cette année. Je tiens également à leur souhaiter un super 40^e anniversaire où nous célébrons la première cérémonie de lever du drapeau franco-ontarien qui a eu lieu à l'Université Laurentienne en 1975.

C'était quelque chose que j'ai beaucoup aimé : participer à tous les événements pour les communautés francophones ici à Toronto, dans la région de York, à Ottawa et autour de la province. J'ai aussi voyagé, avec des membres des autres partis, aux réunions cet été et même l'année passée.

Alors, à tout le monde, bonne fête, bon anniversaire, et joyeuses célébrations autour de la province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup. Further statements?

M^{me} France Gélinas: C'est un moment très spécial pour moi. Ce n'est pas souvent que le français est reconnu ou promu à l'Assemblée. J'aimerais remercier tous les députés d'avoir accepté de faire une délégation comme celle de ce matin pour honorer 400 ans de présence française en Ontario, ainsi que le 40^e anniversaire de notre beau drapeau franco-ontarien.

Je commence en remerciant Denis Vaillancourt et Peter Hominuk d'être ici aujourd'hui. Ce sont le président ainsi que le directeur général de l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario. Je suis contente que vous vous soyez déplacés pour cet événement que je qualifierais de quasi historique. Ce n'est pas souvent que ça arrive à l'Assemblée.

J'aimerais lever le ton un petit peu, mettre ça plus léger, pour vous parler plus spécifiquement du 40^e anniversaire du drapeau. Pourquoi? Parce que le drapeau a été fait par des gens de Sudbury. C'était Gaétan Gervais et un de ses étudiants, Michel Dupuis, qui ont créé le drapeau. Je vais vous raconter quelques petites anecdotes que CBON, la radio de Radio-Canada à Sudbury, ainsi que Prise de parole, la maison d'édition, et l'ACFO de Sudbury ont partagé par rapport à cette journée assez historique.

Notre drapeau, comme on le connaît, le drapeau franco-ontarien, est un produit de la révolution culturelle du Nouvel Ontario qui s'est passée dans les années 1970. On a vu naître, à Sudbury, Prise de parole et le Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario. Certains d'entre nous vont se souvenir de quelques chansons de canaux. C'était dans ce mouvement-là que le drapeau est né.

Notre drapeau, le premier, a été bricolé, monsieur le Président. Il a été bricolé en utilisant des ciseaux et du carton. Ils ont essayé différents arrangements. La fleur de lys a été prise d'une photo dans un dictionnaire, puis la fleur de trille, ils l'ont prise d'une enveloppe d'une lettre qu'ils avaient reçue du gouvernement provincial. Ils ont mis ça ensemble, et ça a été notre premier drapeau.

Il y avait, par contre, un autre drapeau franco-ontarien. Celui-là avait été fait par le Conseil régional d'Ottawa-Carleton et a vraiment été hissé le 24 juin 1975; donc, plus de trois mois avant. Mais les gens de Sudbury avaient été au Bureau du droit d'auteur du Canada et leur ont dit que le nom « drapeau franco-ontarien » avait déjà été pris et ce drapeau franco-ontarien était vert et blanc. Eux, le rouge et le bleu, ça les intéressaient pas trop parce que ce sont des couleurs assez politiques; ils voulaient demeurer apolitiques. Mais, connaissant Gaétan comme je le connais, si c'était à refaire, il mettrait un peu d'orange quelque part, j'en suis certaine. Mais notre drapeau est vert et blanc : vert pour l'été et blanc pour l'hiver.

1050

Quand le drapeau a été hissé pour la première fois, ceux qui l'avaient fabriqué, Gaétan et son étudiant

Michel, sont demeurés anonymes. Ils ne voulaient pas que les gens sachent que c'était eux et que ça venait de Sudbury parce qu'ils voulaient que ce soit un symbole rassembleur. Ils voulaient que ça rassemble tous les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes. Je vous dirais que cela a été un succès assez phénoménal.

On a dû attendre, par contre, 25 longues années avant que l'Assemblée législative ici reconnaisse notre beau drapeau comme étant l'emblème de la communauté franco-ontarienne. C'est fait; c'est depuis le 21 juin 2001 que c'est reconnu, et on a maintenant la journée franco-ontarienne qui se déroule le 25 septembre à toutes les années.

C'est sûr que, cette année étant le 400^e anniversaire de l'arrivée de la francophonie en Ontario, les célébrations sont beaucoup plus animées, je vous dirais, que dans les années passées. C'est sûr que demain, il y aura des levers du drapeau franco-ontarien partout en Ontario. Vous pouvez aller sur le site du drapeau et vous allez voir. Je pense qu'il y a près de 100 différents endroits où on va lever le drapeau franco-ontarien. Je sais que tous mes collègues ont très hâte de participer demain. En même temps, c'est une autre façon de célébrer nos 400 ans d'histoire franco-ontarienne.

Madeleine a déjà—je m'excuse—

Une voix: La ministre.

M^{me} France Gélinas: C'est correct. Elle a déjà mentionné qu'on avait gagné des prix avec Le Rêve de Champlain à TFO et qu'on a eu des simulations de l'arrivée de Samuel de Champlain partout en Ontario. Si vous n'avez pas eu la chance, il en reste quelques-unes. Ne les manquez pas; c'est vraiment bon. En général, bonne journée franco-ontarienne à tout le monde demain. Merci.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Oxford on a point of order.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, earlier, during the introductions, I introduced a group of great constituents from Oxford who were not yet here in the gallery. They have since then arrived and I'd like to welcome them to Queen's Park. I did refrain from renaming them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would have actually stopped you.

I thank all members for their thoughtful comments and appreciate the celebration here in the House.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is to the Acting Premier. We learned this morning that Gerry Lougheed Jr. has been charged with bribery in connection with the Sudbury by-election. Both the Premier and the Minister of Community Safety stood by Mr. Lougheed despite the

damning evidence that all Ontarians heard when they listened to those tapes.

The law-abiding people of this province knew what they heard on those tapes was illegal. Now, through their good work, the OPP have confirmed that what your top Liberal fundraiser did in December was in fact illegal. Gerry Lougheed Jr. has stepped down as chair of the Greater Sudbury Police Services Board. Did he resign voluntarily? Or did you ask him for his resignation?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Of course we are aware of the charges that have been laid against Mr. Lougheed. I am very pleased that the police have informed Pat Sorbara's counsel that she will not face any criminal charges.

We have been open with the Legislature. We have been open with the media. We've been open with the public about allegations related to the Sudbury by-election.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm recognizing the sensitivity of this and I will deal with it accordingly. We will put the questions quietly and we will have the answers quietly. Thank you.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, we have faith in the process. We have co-operated fully in the investigation. We will continue to do that. As this is now a matter before the courts, we will not have further comments.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Acting Premier, you can't hide behind that line. The reality is that Pat Sorbara is an integral part of this active investigation. She was in those tapes. She was part of the conversation with Gerry Lougheed Jr., I believe: "I am [talking] to you, on behalf of the Premier." Pat Sorbara is part of this active investigation. Have you removed her from the Premier's office while these charges proceed through the courts? If not, why not?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I want to reiterate that the police have informed Pat Sorbara's counsel that she will not face any criminal charges. We have confidence in the police to do their work. We have co-operated with the investigation. We will continue to co-operate with the investigation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: To the Acting Premier: Mr. Lougheed was charged today. Part of that charge came about as an investigation that included Pat Sorbara, that included your new member from Sudbury. We need to have some assurances that what is happening in the Premier's office is separate and—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please finish.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Shouting down my questions is not going to make this issue go away.

Speaker, through you to the Acting Premier, will you ask for Pat Sorbara's resignation while these proceed?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me repeat—and I do know that the member opposite—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm at the edge of going to warnings, and I'll do so. Please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I have said now three times—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Nepean—Carleton.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —the police have informed Pat Sorbara's counsel that she will not be facing any criminal charges. The member opposite, I know, has questions prepared, but that is important news.

As we have said, we will always co-operate with the investigation. We have confidence in our police. We will co-operate fully, and as I say, this matter is now before the courts.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is for the Acting Premier. Today is the day that Ontarians across the province have been waiting for, and perhaps it's the day the Premier has been dreading. We have the unprecedented situation of criminal charges being laid against a key Liberal fundraiser for allegedly bribing Andrew Olivier on behalf of the Premier of Ontario. This case strikes right at the heart of the Premier's office.

Acting Premier, will the Premier step aside while these charges are before the courts?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. I'm coming to the Minister of Agriculture. It's a little late, but I'm telling you this is the second time.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I know your questions were written before question period; however, I am very pleased that the police have informed Pat Sorbara's counsel that there will be no criminal charges laid against her. This matter is before the courts. We have confidence in the independence of the police. We will co-operate fully. The Premier has always maintained that her staff did nothing wrong, and we have faith in the process.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the Acting Premier. We in the Ontario PC caucus have been demanding what the vast majority of the people of Ontario have been asking for ever since these tapes became public. Through the actions of Gerry Lougheed Jr. and Pat Sorbara, the Premier has soiled and diminished the integrity of the office she holds. Nothing short of stepping aside will satisfy the people of Ontario.

The Premier thinks she can defy Ontarians with Hydro One, but she cannot defy them when it comes to alleged criminal activity. Will the Premier step aside or does the Premier think she, too, is above the law?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We will not second-guess the work of the OPP. There has been an independent investigation. The police have informed Pat Sorbara's counsel that there will be no criminal charges laid against her. We will continue to co-operate fully with the investigation. The notion on the other side of the House that they know better than those who have investigated this is kind of—you're entitled to those opinions, but they're pretty wild opinions.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplement—ary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the Acting Premier: This Liberal government has been mired in scandal after scandal after scandal. These criminal charges are just the start, with four outstanding OPP investigations. The Premier has to stop grandstanding; the jig is up. The Premier needs to accept the consequences of her scandal-ridden government. The Premier must step aside or lose all confidence of the people of Ontario. Acting Premier, will she do it?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can only imagine that these questions were written before today's question period, before you were informed that the police have informed Pat Sorbara's counsel that there will be no criminal charges laid against her. You might want to refresh the questions, but let me tell you again: We are not going to second-guess—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton is warned.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We will not second-guess the work of the police.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Deputy Premier. The Premier has defended Gerry Lougheed Jr. and refused opposition calls to force him to resign from the Sudbury police services board.

Now that he has been charged, it does immeasurable damage to the reputation of that board and to the Premier's credibility. Instead of defending Liberal insiders, the Premier needs to put the interests of Ontarians ahead of the Liberal Party.

Ontarians deserve an answer. Who ordered Gerry Lougheed to break the law?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said before, the police are doing their investigation. We have co-operated fully with that investigation; we will not interfere with that. This matter is now before the courts, and we'll have no further comment on that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Deputy Premier, Gerry Lougheed Jr. is charged with one count of counselling an offence.

not committed and one count of unlawfully influencing or negotiating appointments. We could very well see the same charges laid against the Premier's own deputy chief of staff; who knows?

The question becomes—I ask again: Who gave the order to Gerry Lougheed Jr. to ask him to break the law on behalf of the Liberal Party? Who gave that order?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Maybe the member opposite missed it when I said that the police have informed Pat Sorbara's counsel that she will not face any charges. This speculation is unfortunate at best. This is a matter that is before the courts, and we will respect the independence of the courts and the police.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplement—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To the Deputy Premier: We all heard the tapes. We heard what Gerry Lougheed said, we heard what Pat Sorbara said, and it was very clear: They were acting on behalf of the Premier, one Kathleen Wynne.

I ask you again: Both Lougheed and Sorbara said they were calling on behalf of the Premier, so again, who ordered them to break the law?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It is nothing short of astounding that the member opposite thinks he knows better than the police who have investigated this. The police have informed Pat Sorbara's counsel that there will be no criminal charges laid. I respect the work of the police; I respect the work of the court system, so we will have no further comment on this. The member opposite does need to, I think, respect the work of the people who investigated this.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Through you, Speaker, back to the Deputy Premier: The Premier and yourself as Acting Premier both stood in this House and defended the actions of both Mr. Lougheed and Ms. Sorbara. The Premier has publicly said, with apparent knowledge, that the conversations Mr. Lougheed is now being charged with having were an attempt to keep Mr. Olivier involved, and that the decision as to who would run as the Liberal candidate was hers.

Mr. Lougheed is now charged with counselling an offence; he said he was there on behalf of the Premier. So I ask again: Who ordered him to break the law?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I think the member opposite actually needs to respect the independence of the police and respect the independence of the courts. Let the courts do their work. We will have no comment on this. It is a matter before the courts.

But as I said earlier, I am pleased that the police have informed Pat Sorbara's counsel that she will not face criminal charges. I know the member doesn't want to hear that, but that is what the police have told the counsel.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Through you, Speaker, to the Deputy Premier: The Premier and yourself were like on

autopilot, saying that you were taking this oh, so very seriously. It turns out so did the Chief Electoral Officer and so did the OPP.

The question is, will the Acting Premier tell us what the Premier knew and when she knew it?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy House leader, second time.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I am again repeating that the police have done their work. The courts are doing their work. That is independent from government and certainly independent from the political process. If the member opposite thinks that there should be political interference in matters like this, I could not disagree more strongly, Speaker.

Let's let the courts do their work. We will support any investigation. We will co-operate fully, as we have done and will continue to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplement—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The Premier and the Acting Premier finally need to read that the writing is on the wall. The Premier and the Acting Premier both stood in this House and defended the actions of both Mr. Lougheed and Ms. Sorbara. But now charges have been laid and holes in the Premier's story are being blown wide open. Lougheed said that he was acting on behalf of the Premier. That's what was said on the tapes. It was clear to everybody who listened to those tapes.

My question to you is this: What did the Premier know, and did she order Mr. Lougheed to break the law?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, we are aware that charges have been laid against Mr. Lougheed. We are also aware that the police have informed Pat Sorbara's counsel there will be no charges laid against her.

We have been open with the Legislature. We have been open with the media. We have been open with the public. We have co-operated fully with the investigation. The Premier has maintained and continues to maintain that her staff have done nothing wrong.

We have faith in the process. We have faith in the independence of the courts and of the police. We have co-operated. We will continue to do so, Speaker. This is a matter now before the courts, where it belongs.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Leadership is all about honesty, integrity and accountability. With this morning's news about the criminal charges being laid against one of the Premier's own in Sudbury, the leadership of this Premier and her government is yet again under a cloud of shame.

In the past, this government was prepared to say anything in order to hang on to power. They did this with the gas plant scandal, the eHealth scandal, the Ornge scandal and, most recently, they did it with the Sudbury by-election bribery scandal.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I ask the Deputy Premier: The police have done their job; will you do yours and will your Premier resign?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, I'm happy that at least that member respects that the police have done their job.

The police have done their job. The police have done their job independent of political interference, and the police have informed Pat Sorbara's counsel that she will not face any criminal charges.

We respect the independence of the police. We respect the independence of the courts. That is a responsible position to take, Speaker. We have co-operated fully and will continue to do so.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Bill Walker: Back to the Deputy Premier: We're asking your government to show integrity, to stand by higher principles. Your government is under four investigations. This is unprecedented in the history of this Legislature. You've wasted billions on the gas plant scandals. You're not listening to people on the fire sale of Hydro One.

But you're not above the law. Will you do the honourable thing—will the Premier do the right thing and resign?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I know the Premier and all of us fully understand that we are not above the law. We are respectful of the police. We are respectful of the courts. We have co-operated fully, Speaker, and the police have informed counsel—

Mr. Paul Miller: That's choice.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And that's the second time for the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

1110

Interjection: He's not in his seat.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. It's irrelevant.

Please finish.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, we have co-operated fully with the investigation. It has been conducted free from political interference, as well it should be. No charges are going to be laid against Pat Sorbara. The matter regarding Mr. Lougheed is before the courts, and that's where it will be dealt with.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Listen, Deputy Premier, this just doesn't cut it. The reality is this: The tapes clearly say that Ms. Sorbara, in his own words, was there on behalf of the Premier of Ontario—or, Mr. Lougheed. Correction: Mr. Lougheed.

Again through you, Speaker: Everybody has heard the tapes. It is crystal clear that Mr. Lougheed was very clear on why he was there. He was meeting with Mr. Olivier, in his own words, because he was there on behalf of the Premier of Ontario. So we're asking you one simple

question: Will you confirm today that, in fact, the Premier of Ontario did give him those orders and he was acting under her direction?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy House leader is warned.

Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, again Inspector Clouseau across the way here thinks he can do a better job.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock.

Order, please.

I'm going to ask the Deputy Premier to withdraw.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would remind everyone: It's an exact reason why we in this House have the tradition of identifying people either by their title or their riding. I would ask you all to respect that.

Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite, I know, is interested in doing his own investigation, and that is certainly fine, but I trust the police to do their work. They have conducted their investigation. They have come to a finding. We are aware that Mr. Lougheed has been charged, and we are aware that Ms. Sorbara will not be charged.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The facts are these: The tapes were very clear in saying that Mr. Lougheed was there on behalf of the Premier. The Ontario Provincial Police have conducted an investigation. Elections Ontario has conducted an investigation. Both have come to the same conclusion: that in fact Mr. Lougheed offered a bribe to Mr. Olivier and said he was doing so on behalf of the Premier of Ontario.

I ask you again: Can you confirm, yes or no, if that direction did or didn't come from the Premier of Ontario, one Kathleen Wynne?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: On this side of the House, we believe in letting the police do their work. We co-operated fully with the police. They have come to a conclusion. We're aware of that conclusion. We trust the police. We trust the court system to do their work in a completely independent way.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

The University of Ottawa Heart Institute is Canada's largest cardiovascular health centre, dedicated to understanding, treating and preventing heart disease. The heart institute delivers high-tech care with a personal touch that shapes the way cardiovascular medicine is practised. They provide care to more than 80,000 patients each year and provide training to more than 100 physicians

annually. They serve patients locally in my riding of Ottawa–Orléans, which is the home of the largest francophone community in Ottawa, as well as patients across the province and country. You might even say that the University of Ottawa Heart Institute is close to my heart and the heart of my constituents, because they provide services in both official languages.

Along with my colleagues in Ottawa, we were with the minister recently when he announced infrastructure funding to the Ottawa Hospital. Can the minister tell this House what our government is doing for the University of Ottawa Heart Institute?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question from the member from Ottawa–Orléans.

It's important that our government support a range of advanced cardiac services provided by the University of Ottawa Heart Institute, procedures such as bypass surgery and angioplasties. In fact, in January of this year, our government announced that we would be investing \$162 million in the expansion of Ottawa's heart institute to help even more patients access that high-quality care that they provide.

Since 2003, our government has committed over \$172 million in capital projects alone to the Ottawa heart institute, which are all either complete or currently under way. We continue to support our Wait Time Strategy at the heart institute. In fact, since 2005, the wait times for angioplasty alone have been reduced by 52% by the heart institute.

We're extremely proud of the work the institute does. We'll keep working to support it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Merci, monsieur le Ministre, pour votre réponse.

I was absolutely delighted this summer when I was able to stand beside you at the Ottawa Hospital to announce that our government is providing over \$10 million to the 17 hospitals in our Champlain LHIN, including over \$9 million to five hospitals in the Ottawa area.

The investment of over \$9 million to improve infrastructure in Ottawa-area hospitals is great news for residents of the Ottawa community and surely for Orléans. I was disappointed recently when I heard the Leader of the Opposition suggest that our government was cutting funding to the Ottawa heart institute, and similarly to the Ottawa Hospital.

Can the minister tell this House more about the investments made in the hospital system in Ontario and how those investments will affect the Ottawa region?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you again for the question from the member from Ottawa–Orléans.

As the Minister of Health I'm committed, as this government is, to a strong publicly funded health care system and hospital system that efficiently provides high-quality patient services for all Ontarians.

Hospital funding in fact has increased by 56% since 2003. That's \$5.7 billion, and it's a total of \$1.4 billion

just for hospitals located in Ottawa and in the Ottawa region alone.

At the Ottawa heart institute, we've increased funding by 68%, an increase of more than \$48 million. We're making additional investments to other hospitals in the area, like CHEO, the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, where we invested nearly \$1 million this year in that hospital and others, specifically for chronic pain programs for children across this province.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Acting Premier.

It's a shameful day in Ontario. The Premier's key Liberal operative in northern Ontario is charged with two criminal offences. We now have an influencing scandal in Ontario. Gerry Lougheed was clearly heard on audio recording stating he was representing the Premier. He asked a prospective Liberal nominee to step aside in favour of the Premier's hand-picked choice, and he proposed to use taxpayers' money to smooth the way with the offer of a job.

We've all heard the tapes. What Lougheed said is no different than what the Premier's chief of staff, Pat Sorbara, said. So shouldn't she step aside until we hear about charges from the Chief Electoral Officer?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, once again I have to express concern that the member opposite thinks he can do a better job investigating than the police can.

The police have done a thorough investigation. We have co-operated fully with that investigation and we will continue to co-operate fully. The police have come to a decision. We are aware that charges have been laid against Mr. Lougheed and we are also aware that charges will not be laid against Pat Sorbara.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Acting Premier, Speaker: I heard that same stuff during the two years of the gas plant scandal, so don't go lecturing us. We've always known that Lougheed and Sorbara acted in bad faith when we heard the tapes. We knew that when the Chief Electoral Officer tabled his report and we know it to be true today.

The Premier's fingerprints are all over this criminal scandal, much as she may protest otherwise. The OPP believes Lougheed illegally influenced Andrew Olivier to step aside for her hand-picked candidate. Now her fall guy is paying the price for this illicit behaviour.

1120

Pat Sorbara is heard on tape delivering the exact same message as Gerry Lougheed, allegedly offering the same bribe. Shouldn't she step aside until we hear about the charges under the Election Act?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have been listening very carefully, and I understand the sensitivity of this topic. I'm going to counsel all members to use their language very carefully, to ensure that you're not making

accusations of a criminal nature to any member. It was getting close. I'm not saying it did. But I'm asking you to measure your words, please.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite is second-guessing the work of the police. I have a problem with that. I think the police have conducted a thorough investigation. We have co-operated with that investigation. They have come to a conclusion. The fact that the member opposite believes his investigation is superior to the police investigation is a remarkable assertion.

We respect the work of the police. We respect the independence of the police. We respect the courts, and we will let the courts do their work.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Again to the Deputy Premier: We ask people in society to always take responsibility for their actions. We ask our children to take responsibility for their actions.

In this case, we know the law has potentially been broken because criminal charges have been laid against Mr. Loughheed. We know that, in fact, what was said on those tapes by Mr. Loughheed and Ms. Sorbara—that they were acting on behalf of instructions from the Premier. They were there on behalf of the Premier to do the work that she wanted them to do.

So I ask again: Is the Premier, is the Deputy Premier, is anybody in this government prepared to take responsibility for the actions of those people who acted on your behalf? Is the Premier prepared to do that? Yes or no?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Premier, from the very beginning, has been very open and transparent, has co-operated fully with the police investigation.

We have confidence in the police. We have confidence in the court. They have come to a conclusion. We know what the results of that are, and we will let the matter be dealt with in the appropriate place, and that is in the courts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Speaker, through you to the Deputy Premier: Two investigations have concluded the same findings. The Elections Ontario investigation found that in fact there is a case to be made against those two individuals when it comes to a breach of the Election Act. It was very clear on the tapes, what was said. They were there on behalf of the Premier of Ontario. The Ontario Provincial Police, as a result of its investigation on the criminal charges side, has charged Mr. Loughheed.

So I ask you the question once again: Whose orders were they acting under? Were they doing this on behalf of the Premier? Yes or no?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, once again, I have confidence in the police to do their investigation. They have done a very thorough investigation. They have conducted themselves in a non-partisan way. I believe that is the way justice is served here in Canada: to have independence between the police, the courts and government.

We have co-operated fully, and the matter is now before the courts.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: My question is to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. Our government continues to demonstrate strong support for consumers and has enhanced consumer protection and awareness in various sectors over the years.

Speaking with my constituents in Scarborough Southwest and speaking to other residents across Ontario, I keep hearing that Ontarians want access to the services they need without being subject to harmful practices. Our government addressed this concern across various sectors by passing the Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers Act in 2013.

While Ontarians have benefited from the legislation's door-to-door protections for many months now, I understand that the Minister of Government and Consumer Services was joined by the Credit Counselling Service of Sault Ste. Marie this summer for an important announcement.

Mr. Speaker, my question is: Would the minister please describe the new protections that Ontarians can count on from our government?

Hon. David Orazietti: I want to thank the member from Scarborough Southwest for asking about important consumer issues and certainly for his advocacy in his riding for consumers.

We passed Bill 55, the Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers Act, which protects against aggressive, high-pressure, door-to-door sales strategies, especially for water heater rentals. It provides reforms that help to improve debt settlement services, to make them more affordable and more accountable, and it provides measures that make the real estate market more open and transparent.

As of July 1, we implemented new rules that add accountability to debt settlement in the following areas: Debtors cannot be charged fees until they start making payments to their creditors; we've capped debt settlement fees at 15% for a series of payments or 10% for a lump sum; and contracts must be clear and cannot misrepresent the services they provide. Additionally, new rules give all consumers a 10-day cooling-off period.

Speaker, we're pleased that we're making progress to help protect vulnerable consumers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Through the Speaker, my supplementary question to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services is the following: With an increasing amount of Ontarians falling into debt, I'm pleased to note that the minister is focusing attention on implementing adequate protections. I understand that the Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers Act also includes measures to increase accountability and competitiveness in Ontario's real estate sector that were implemented July 1. I've always felt that Ontario's real estate professionals are among the best, contributing

billions of dollars to our economy and providing jobs across the province.

Efforts to help the sector grow, while adding consumer protections, would be welcome in my riding of Scarborough Southwest and in every riding across this province.

My question is to the minister. I want the minister to please update the House on how our government improved the home buying and selling process for Ontarians this past summer.

Hon. David Orazietti: Again to the member from Scarborough Southwest: A fair, accountable real estate environment has been an ongoing priority for our government. When the act was passed in December 2013, home sellers and buyers were immediately given more power to negotiate both fees and commissions when working with real estate professionals.

I'm pleased that the new rules that came into force this past summer provide greater protection and transparency for homebuyers in multiple offer situations. The rules ensure that realtors cannot mislead homebuyers about offers because they require real estate salespeople and brokers to only present offers in writing. They also require brokerages to retain copies of all written offers for the period of one year, and they also allow a person making an offer on the property to ask about the number of offers that have been made.

These reforms, Speaker, act on stakeholder feedback and will help the Real Estate Council of Ontario better regulate against phantom offers. This is one of the important changes we're making—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Acting Premier. This morning I had the honour of attending the opening ceremony of the National Peace Officers' Memorial Run. During that ceremony I was reminded of the courage and integrity shown by the men and women of Ontario's police services in upholding the laws of our country.

That stands in stark contrast to the news today that the Premier's key fundraiser has been charged with bribery. Those charges are laid because the Premier allegedly—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Those charges are laid because the Premier allegedly sent Gerry Lougheed Jr. to offer Andrew Olivier a job in exchange for not running in the Sudbury by-election.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier has disgraced her office—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please finish.

1130

Mr. Patrick Brown: Speaker, the Premier has disgraced her office. The people of Ontario are demanding that she step aside during this court case.

To the Acting Premier: Will the Premier step aside?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm happy to hear the Leader of the Opposition speak about the respect that he has for the police officers. We share that. We are blessed in this province to have superb police officers. It is because of our respect for those police officers, Speaker, that we respect their work in this case, among others.

The independence of the police is a critically important part of our democracy. We respect the work. We've co-operated fully with them. We share the respect, and that's why we have let them do the work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Acting Premier: During the course of the Ontario PC leadership campaign, I travelled to every small town, every large town in Ontario. I heard again and again that people are sick and tired of this scandal-plagued government.

They're sick and tired of a government that doesn't respect their hard-earned tax dollars. They're sick and tired of a Liberal Premier who thinks her government can get away with breaking the law. They want this Premier and this Liberal government to be held accountable. The criminal courts will now do that.

Mr. Speaker, back to the Acting Premier: Will the Premier show an ounce of integrity and step aside during this trial?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, I think if anybody wants to talk about the integrity of politicians in this place, the Premier is a woman of impeccable integrity.

The Premier has co-operated fully with the police investigation. She has been open. She has been transparent. She is committed to doing the right thing every single time, Speaker.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question, through you, Speaker, is to the Deputy Premier. Deputy Premier, what does it take for your government to finally admit its role in this entire scandal?

Mr. Lougheed is on tape. He says clearly that he's acting on behalf of the Premier when he goes to meet with Mr. Olivier. Mrs. Sorbara on the phone does the same; she says she's doing this on behalf of the Premier. We have an Elections Ontario investigation that found that, in fact, the law had been breached, and we now have criminal charges, on behalf of the Ontario Provincial Police, against Mr. Lougheed.

So I'm going to ask you again: Will the Deputy Premier stand in this House today and finally admit that,

in fact, these people were acting on behalf of the Premier's instructions?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Once again, I have to say that the police have done a thorough investigation, an independent investigation, a non-partisan investigation. They have reached conclusions, Speaker. They have informed Pat Sorbara's counsel that she will not be facing any criminal charges.

I understand the politics of the member opposite. I understand what he's trying to do. But when you think about our justice system, when you think about our police system—

Mr. Paul Miller: It has nothing to do with politics. You're guilty. Guilty is guilty.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek is warned.

Finish, please. Wrap up.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I'm doing my best to ignore some of the heckles from across the floor, but I have to say the independence of the police is fundamental to our democracy.

We respect the independence of the police. We respect the excellence of their investigation capabilities. The matter is before the courts, where it will be dealt with independently.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Again through you, Speaker, to the Deputy Premier: The Deputy Premier says this is all about politics. This is all about Liberal politics. It's exactly what's going on. The government and the Liberal Party tried to game the system in such a way that gave them an advantage in the Sudbury by-election.

The tapes are clear. The tapes say, "I am here on behalf"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Children and Youth Services—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm trying to admonish you while you're talking, Minister. And the Minister of Economic Development will also come to order.

Please finish.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The tapes are clear: They were acting on behalf of the Premier of Ontario. This is what they said on the tapes. It's what Mr. Olivier said, as well.

The Ontario Provincial Police have come to a conclusion. Elections Ontario have come to a conclusion. So I ask you again: Will the Deputy Premier finally admit that, in fact, it was the Premier of Ontario who directed these individuals to offer Mr. Olivier a bribe?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What the member opposite is saying is that he knows better than the OPP; that is what he is saying. I respectfully disagree with him, Speaker. The OPP have done their investigation, which has been a very thorough investigation. We have co-operated fully with that investigation. And I will take the decisions of the OPP over the decisions of the member opposite any day of the week.

FRANCOPHONE IMMIGRATION

IMMIGRATION FRANCOPHONE

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade. Minister, for 400 years, francophones have been building and shaping Ontario. Dans ma circonscription de Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, il y a plus de 60 % de francophones, et nous sommes chanceux d'avoir une communauté francophone vibrante et forte.

I know that much of our government values diversity of all sorts, whether it be race, religion, nationality or language. Je sais que les francophones de l'Ontario contribuent de façon essentielle à la grande diversité de la province.

I was pleased when your ministry brought forward Ontario's Immigration Strategy, which set a target of 5% francophone immigration. The constituents in my riding have been equally excited and pleased to see their government commit to increasing francophone populations. Speaker, could the minister tell us what our government is doing to meet this target?

Hon. Michael Chan: Merci beaucoup for the question. I want to thank the honourable member for asking it. Speaker, I cannot agree enough with the member. Ontario's francophone population is as proud, strong and vibrant as any, and we are committed to helping it reach that fantastic target of 5% immigration.

Just today, my ministry announced the creation of a group of experts, comprised of 11 francophone community members from a variety of sectors, regions and areas of expertise. It also includes a representative from Ontario's French Language Services Commissioner. This group met for the first time in June of this year, and I look forward to seeing what they will achieve going forward. We have the tools and resources here to help francophone newcomers succeed and continue to protect and celebrate francophone culture in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Grant Crack: I'd like to thank the minister for his answer and the hard work that he does on this file. Je suis heureux d'apprendre qu'il y a un groupe d'experts en immigration francophone et je suis convaincu que mes commettants à Glengarry—Prescott—Russell le seront aussi.

It's true that, like many other diverse populations, our francophone community faces unique challenges when immigrating or integrating into Ontario. Nous savons que notre communauté francophone est essentielle au développement économique et social, entre autres, de l'Ontario. C'est pour ça que nous devons continuer à trouver des solutions innovantes pour augmenter l'immigration francophone en Ontario et les aider à relever les défis.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, what exactly will this group of experts be discussing, and how will it benefit francophone immigration in my riding, the great Glengarry—Prescott—Russell?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you again for the question.

Speaker, we are very, very excited about this group of experts. The 11 leaders in their fields are volunteering their time and their expertise to benefit the province by helping us increase the number of francophone immigrants to Ontario and ensure the sustainability of Franco-Ontarian communities.

The group will examine how to promote, welcome, integrate and retain francophone immigrants in Ontario. In spring 2016, they will provide us with a report of their findings and recommendations. This information will be used to inform future decision-making and improve existing supports for francophone newcomers. Building stronger francophone communities is part of the government's economic plan for Ontario, and this group will help us do just that. Merci, Speaker.

1140

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is for the Acting Premier. Yesterday we learned from the Auditor General of the sad state of access to front-line health care from the CCACs, which some have described as criminal. And sadly, today we have learned that the Liberals are willing to engage in criminal activity to get what they want. So, simply, I would like to ask the Acting Premier: Will the Liberal government and the Liberal party stop breaking the law to benefit their own interests?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question. The comment about the CCACs: Of course, the last part of the comment we don't agree with at all. Yesterday we received the report of the Auditor General on our CCACs. I welcome that report. In fact, I endorsed it on behalf of the government. I said that I agreed with all of the recommendations, and we accept all of the recommendations, and we plan on implementing all of her recommendations. It was an important road map, quite frankly, for us to use going forward. We're putting it alongside the actions that we've already taken this year that flowed from the expert panel appointed by the government, Gail Donner's group—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: —to actually help us and provide us with good advice, leading to even better quality of care provided through our home and community care services. That's what we're doing. We're embarking on those changes, and I've welcomed her report.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Back to the Acting Premier. Simply, they're deferring their answers because they can't muster a proper one up because they're so busted. You know what? This government is rife with criminal activity, and it doesn't matter what—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

I'm not going to accept that. The member will withdraw.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Carry on.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: The actions of the government in Sudbury—perhaps it's a stark reminder that the Liberals have no respect for the democratic process. They arrogantly believe that they're accountable to no one and therefore they act accordingly, as we're seeing right now.

I'd like to go back to the Acting Premier and ask: If we can't trust the government to act with integrity in a simple by-election, how can we trust this Liberal government to act responsibly, introducing policies that impact not just the riding but the whole province?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm absolutely shocked that the member opposite would use such despicable language when referring to the hard work done by our front-line health care workers on behalf of people in this province, in helping people and providing home and community support to them. I'm proud of the work that our thousands upon thousands of front-line workers provide on a daily basis, helping more than 800,000 Ontarians over the year.

We received an important report from the Auditor General. I've embraced and endorsed and accepted that report. I plan on implementing all of the recommendations. We're going to be transformational, as we have been. We've already introduced significant changes in our home and community care system. We plan on doing that. But to use such language when she's referring to our hard-working front-line health care workers is, quite frankly, despicable.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please—without comment.

New question.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is for the Acting Premier. Yesterday we learned in the Auditor General's report into the CCACs that in 2014, 62%—\$1.5 billion—of the funds that go to the CCAC went to private, for-profit home care service providers—in a public system—like CarePartners in Welland and Norfolk. CarePartners continues to receive their piece of the pie even as their front-line staff, nurses who do everything from wound care to dialysis, have been on strike seeking a collective agreement for the last six months.

Will the Acting Premier tell these front-line workers and nurses who are here today why they've been left out on the street, unable to provide care for thousands of patients in Niagara and Norfolk, while the government continues to shovel money into CarePartners so they can pay people to take their jobs away?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question, and I'm happy that there are members of the nursing profession here—

Interjection: And personal support workers.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: And personal support workers, as well. Thank you for indicating that.

Thank you for the work that you do day in and day out, on behalf of Ontarians. We appreciate it, and we respect it.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity a couple of weeks ago of meeting with OPSEU, with Smokey Thomas, as well as with representatives of those same nurses and front-line workers that the member opposite is talking about. We had a significant conversation, and as a result of that I had a good understanding of the challenges they're facing in negotiations with CarePartners. As a result of that, in fact even prior to that, we have implored and asked both parties, but specifically CarePartners, to get back to the negotiating table and to work hard with OPSEU, the bargaining agent representing those front-line health care workers, to find a solution to this outstanding difficulty.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Last week, the OPSEU negotiating committee did go back to the bargaining table in an effort to end this strike. The CarePartners negotiator, a well-known, well-paid negotiator who actually is a negotiator for OPS negotiations with the Liberal government, tabled a new proposal that was never there before that demanded that any costs added by the ORPP to CarePartners with implementing that plan will have to be borne entirely by these front-line workers.

Will the Acting Premier, in front of these home care workers, these health care professionals who are here today, commit to direct CarePartners to withdraw the outrageous ORPP demand immediately, get serious about bargaining, negotiate a collective agreement in good faith, not bad faith, or see CarePartners money dry up?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you. Just a reminder: There are some people with Ws.

Minister?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know that the third party agrees with me that we shouldn't be bargaining or discussing the details of the bargaining in public, certainly not in the Legislature. I think we also agree that we believe that the partners, both CarePartners and the front-line workers who are aptly represented by OPSEU, need to, in a serious fashion, get back to the bargaining table and resolve this long-standing situation.

Our goal, as government, is to ensure that the care that is being provided to people is of the highest quality. I know that the Ministry of Labour has provided mediators that are available as well. As I mentioned, I met with OPSEU and the front-line workers just a couple of weeks ago. I am watching developments very, very closely. We aren't directly involved in negotiations. Labour stands ready to help. We want this resolved as much as you do.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Han Dong: My question is for the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Speaker, I know parents in Ontario want their children to grow up happy, healthy and ready to succeed in life. They expect our government to work together with them to support their efforts to raise a healthy family.

But as of 2012, almost one in every three children in Ontario was at an unhealthy weight. This was often the topic when I took my kids to their summer camp at University Settlement in Trinity-Spadina. This problem is more severe in boys than girls, and in particular, our aboriginal children. As a parent of two young children, I'm deeply concerned. Childhood obesity is threatening our children's future and the future of this province.

Through you, Speaker, to the minister: Please update this House about what your ministry is doing to combat obesity amongst Ontario's youngest population.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I want to begin by thanking the hard-working member from Trinity-Spadina for that question. I know, Mr. Speaker, that as a father of two young kids himself, this issue isn't important to him just because it's important in his community, but it's also important for him as a father.

1150

As a mother myself, I couldn't agree more that we need to invest in our children's health. That is why this summer we announced the Healthy Kids Community Challenge, which provides up to \$33.5 million to 45 communities across Ontario, including First Nations communities. The funds will be used to promote healthy eating, physical activity and healthy lifestyle choices for Ontario's children.

I was delighted to be able to visit a number of these communities that were selected for the healthy kids challenge, communities like Peterborough, Windsor, Essex county, Hamilton and Windsor. I look forward to responding with more in the supplementary—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Han Dong: I would like to thank the minister for her update and her hard work at the ministry, protecting the future of Ontario's children.

But I wish to draw upon a comment that the minister made in her previous response regarding the prevalence of childhood overweight and obesity in Ontario's aboriginal children.

We all know that children of our First Nations communities often face particular health challenges. It is absolutely vital that these communities are provided with an equality of culturally appropriate opportunities for their children to grow and thrive.

Through you to the minister: What is our government doing to ensure the health and the success of our First Nations children in this province?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I again thank the member opposite for the supplementary question. Our government knows how important it is that every child in Ontario has

an equal opportunity to lead a healthy, productive life. Improving the health of First Nations, Inuit and Métis people and children in Ontario is a priority for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. That's why our ministry announced \$3.5 million for six First Nations communities across Ontario to participate in the Healthy Kids Community Challenge.

In collaboration with our aboriginal partners, the ministry is making progress in addressing the unique health needs of aboriginal people. For example, last month I had the privilege of visiting the De dwa da dehs nye>s Aboriginal Health Centre located in Hamilton. The health centre will use \$525,000 in funds from the ministry to develop culturally appropriate care.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Todd Smith: My question is for the Acting Premier this morning.

The government's suggestion this morning is that it's perfectly acceptable for the Premier's deputy chief of staff to be under investigation and still employed by the government. In fact, the government has set the ethical standard so low that as long as you don't get arrested, you can work in the Premier's office. I know of fast-food joints that hold their employees to higher standards than this government does.

Mr. Speaker, does the Deputy Premier think that it's acceptable for a member of the Premier's staff to continue their employment here simply because they won't appear before a judge?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The police have informed Pat Sorbara's counsel that she will not be facing any charges, so I'm not quite sure where the member opposite is going. But what I can say is that we have co-operated fully, and we will continue to co-operate fully. I respect the work of the police, and I respect the work of the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You will withdraw the word.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I withdraw—oh.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, the member from Leeds—Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: I withdraw.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Who was it?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let's be clear: There was an unparliamentary word used. I assumed it was the member from Leeds—Grenville. The member has withdrawn, and I appreciate that. This is where all of this confusion comes from when we're not paying attention to each other.

Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm done.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Todd Smith: Television actors have morals clauses in their contracts that cost them their job if they

"commit any act or do anything which might tend to bring the actor into public disrepute, contempt, scandal or ridicule, or which might tend to reflect unfavourably on the network."

You know, Speaker, Pat Sorbara would be held to a higher standard of ethical conduct if she actually played herself on House of Cards than she's held to by the Premier in her office.

I ask again, does the Acting Premier believe that it's acceptable for a core member of this government to continue their employment, even though they were under police investigation? How much lower can the public expect this government's ethical standards to go?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, what I can tell you is that the Premier has maintained that her staff did nothing wrong, and in fact the police have concurred with that. They have informed Pat Sorbara's counsel that there will be no charges laid.

As I've said before, we respect the work of the OPP. We respect the independence of the OPP. We respect the work of the courts. We respect the independence of the courts. It's clear that both parties opposite are questioning the independence or the excellence of the investigation. On our side, we respect the work of the independent police and the independent courts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1156 to 1300.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the member from Leeds—Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: Speaker, I rise to give you notice that I'll be filing a point of privilege in regard to comments made by the Deputy Premier regarding Pat Sorbara.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would point out to the member that that's a process that's not necessary; just the filing is what is the normal procedure. But having said that, thank you for the information.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to welcome Ambassador Wu, director general of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office, and Michelle Lu, assistant director, who are in the members' gallery with us this afternoon. They're here to hear my statement later on in the statement portion of our meeting.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think the member from Oxford just set a record on introducing people today. I just thought I'd editorialize.

The member who is going to introduce people will be standing right by her seat so that I can acknowledge the member from Thornhill.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I also want to welcome Miriam Ku and Victor. Victor travelled with me to Taiwan this year, and was an amazing guide. Miriam and I attend many events in York region around the GTA together.

Thank you for being here, and for bringing your wonderful guests.

Welcome, Mr. Ambassador.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MID-AUTUMN FESTIVAL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: This Sunday, we celebrate the annual Mid-Autumn or Moon Festival. It's an important traditional festival celebrated by many people from Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia, especially among those of Chinese descent. I am honoured that Ambassador Wu and Michelle Lu from the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office are here today to mark this occasion with us.

Oxford is proud of the strong relationship we've had with Taiwan since George Leslie Mackay travelled there in the late 1800s and became one of the most well-known Canadians in Taiwan.

On behalf of the people of Oxford and the PC caucus, I'm pleased to offer best wishes to everyone celebrating the Mid-Autumn Festival. It's a time to get together with family, share moon cakes and give thanks.

At this time of thanksgiving, I also want to take a moment to recognize and thank the Taiwanese Canadian Community Service Association. Last weekend, I was pleased to attend their 18th-anniversary annual fundraising dinner and bring greetings on behalf of our leader. I want to commend them all for their good work and the many people that they help. Honouring their work to help the community is especially fitting at this time of year.

This weekend, people of ethnic Chinese background across Ontario and around the world will be celebrating the Mid-Autumn Festival with their communities and their families. We wish them all the best and a happy Mid-Autumn Festival.

Thank you for being here.

SADIA GASSIM

Ms. Catherine Fife: Sadia Gassim came to Canada as an immigrant from the war-torn Somalia of 1993. For many years, she focused on community building and social change in Waterloo region. Sadia died of pancreatic cancer on July 28, just a week before her 60th birthday, and her loss is felt deeply in our community. Her work was not done.

In 1994, she established World Wide Opportunities for Women, a non-profit organization that helped support newcomer women. Sadia worked with the African Women's Alliance of Waterloo Region. She was the key organizer of the annual Afro Festival in Waterloo Park, and was a proud board member on the Canadian Council of Muslim Women.

Sadia believed in education as essential for the liberation of women. Countless women, many survivors of abuse, attribute their pursuit of education to Sadia's

personal guidance and her support. Sadia attributed her commitment to social justice to her father, who had risen from poverty to become a medical doctor and community leader. He believed in the education of women and encouraged Sadia to attend university.

Sadia was an altruist. She was a strong Muslim feminist who believed in the power of women to make positive change. She was not afraid to address controversial issues such as female genital mutilation, violence against women, systemic racism and climate change.

Sadia was deeply loved and respected by her four boys, her many diverse friends and colleagues, and the local Somali community in the region. There are few more deserving of recognition in our Legislature than Sadia. We will miss her.

INTERNATIONAL WEEK OF THE DEAF

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'm honoured to rise in the House today to recognize International Week of the Deaf, which is taking place from September 21 to 27. It is an initiative of the World Federation of the Deaf. The occasion was first marked in Rome in 1958. Since then, it has provided a chance to raise awareness around the world every year.

Our province, Ontario, is proud to join other countries in observing this important occasion. This year's theme highlights the importance of sign language for children as a basic human right.

I am proud to say, as a Canadian, that Ontario is a leader in accessibility. We require staff to be trained on accessibility. We are the first province in Canada to have legislation that sets out a clear goal and a time frame for accessibility by 2025. Greater accessibility means greater opportunity for people with disabilities to participate in our workforce and our economy, and for entrepreneurs to create new businesses based on inclusive design, products and services.

In particular, I would like to recognize the great work of the Ontario Association of the Deaf. They are tireless advocates, and make a big difference in our communities.

I invite my honourable colleagues to join me in celebrating International Week of the Deaf.

WOMEN'S HOUSE

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I am pleased today to share with my fellow members how proud I am of Huron-Bruce resident Devony House. This tenacious young girl chose to give up her birthday gifts this year in favour of raising money for Women's House in Kincardine. Women's House provides services to women and children of Bruce and Grey counties who have experienced or are experiencing abuse, sexual violence and homelessness. They also provide educational resources on sexual assault and information on how to recognize it.

In addition to raising \$305 herself, Devony has expanded her mission and is now encouraging the broader community to get involved. At the shelter, Devony delivered the following message. "I want to issue a chal-

lence to all of the businesses in Kincardine to match my donation,” she said, with a huge smile and a sense of pride.

This is not the first time that Devony has committed herself to helping Women’s House, with her first appearance at the house occurring on International Women’s Day this past March.

Devony is just one of many volunteers who make the work of Women’s House possible. With the help of people like her, the organization will host their annual Women’s House gala on October 17, which will raise money for their essential services.

I hope the Kincardine community takes up Devony’s challenge. It warms my heart to see Devony committing herself to working on behalf of this important cause, and I thank her for that.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Ms. Cindy Forster: I’m proud to be here today to stand with the health care members of OPSEU Local 294 who are here today in the members’ gallery; 140 members of this local who are community nurses who provide complex nursing care to people in homes in Norfolk and Niagara, from wound care to chemo and dialysis in patients’ homes across the region. Yet for six months they have been on a forced strike by their employer, CarePartners, and have been attempting to negotiate a collective agreement for over two years. Over 1,400 patients were serviced by these hard-working and dedicated nurses, and the ones suffering the most from this strike are the patients.

As a former nurse myself, I have joined them on the picket line, and I have written to the Minister of Health. But, to date, we’ve had no action from the minister’s office.

Today, the day after the AG’s report—the Auditor General put out her report on the CCACs—I’m calling for CarePartners to return to the table. Her report showed that there are serious issues within the system, with CEOs fattening their paycheques by as much as 27% while front-line workers are on the picket line.

It’s time for the government to start thinking about vulnerable patients who continue to suffer because of bad-faith bargaining and because of this strike. This is an honoured profession, and I don’t think they need to be on the picket line. They need to be where they do their work best, with their patients.

1310

EID AL-ADHA

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today and extend best wishes to Muslims across Ontario and around the world who are celebrating Eid al-Adha. Eid al-Adha, or the feast of sacrifice, marks the end of the holy pilgrimage of Hajj to Mecca. Eid is about sacrifice, equality and family. It’s a time when Muslims come together to give thanks and show com-

passion to those less fortunate. It’s also a time to remember their traditions and roots.

This morning, I was honoured to attend the Muslim Association of Canada’s Eid celebration with the Premier and MPP Baker. It was great to see so many Muslim families out celebrating this special occasion with prayers, visits, and exchanges of greetings and gifts.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario’s diversity is one of our greatest strengths. We are fortunate to live in a vibrant, inclusive and welcoming society that celebrates our differences. Together, we will make Ontario one of the best places to live, work and raise a family.

I want to acknowledge the important contributions of the Muslim community to our province. Thank you for helping to shape our social, economic and cultural landscape.

I also wants to take a moment to remember the challenges that some of our Muslim friends and neighbours are facing when it comes to the refugee crisis abroad, and to remember the more than 700 people killed during Hajj this year so far. Our thoughts are with the families of those loved ones.

To everyone celebrating this special occasion I extend my very best wishes for a joyous and memorable Eid. Eid Mubarak.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Municipal councils in my riding have spoken loudly and clearly about this government’s planned sell-off of Hydro One. One after the other has forwarded me formal resolutions blasting the plan. The city of North Bay, the town of Mattawa, the municipality of East Ferris, and the townships of Bonfield, Chisholm, Mattawan and Papineau-Cameron have all stated their formal opposition.

Their resolutions note, as our caucus has noted, that a privatized Hydro One will no longer be subject to scrutiny by officers of the Legislature, including the Ombudsman and the Auditor General. They believe that this will result in higher hydro rates that families can’t afford.

They also note that, “The provincial government has no mandate from the voters to sell any part of Hydro One.” Indeed, Speaker, this government did not campaign on this during last year’s election.

The councils, in their resolutions, asked the provincial government to “halt the sale of any part of Hydro One and maintain Hydro One as a public asset for the benefit of all Ontarians.”

Speaker, I will take the Hansard copy tomorrow and release it to all of the councils who sent resolutions to me.

MID-AUTUMN FESTIVAL

Ms. Soo Wong: I rise today to celebrate the Mid-Autumn Festival. It is the second-largest Asian celebration after Chinese New Year, celebrated on the 15th

day of the eighth lunar month. This festival is a harvest festival dating back over 3,000 years.

On Mid-Autumn Festival night the moon is supposed to be the brightest and the fullest, which is why the festival is also known as the Day of Reunion and the Moon Festival. In the Chinese culture it is believed that a full moon is a symbol of peace, prosperity and family reunion. Eating moon cakes and other sweet treats is just one of the many traditions associated with this occasion.

While it is certainly one of the largest Chinese events in my community, it is also celebrated by many other Asian communities, including the Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, Indonesian, Singaporean and Taiwanese, all of which are present in my diverse riding of Scarborough–Agincourt.

This year I have a special celebration for Scarborough–Agincourt residents, Mr. Speaker, as Premier Wynne and I will be visiting the community and local businesses on September 26, in recognition of our rich Asian Canadian heritage.

I encourage everyone to join in celebrating the Mid-Autumn Festival.

YOGI BERRA

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I rise today to pay tribute to a legend in baseball and sport: Yogi Berra. Yogi Berra passed away recently at the age of 90, Mr. Speaker.

Yogi Berra was a major-league baseball player for 19 years and he spent the majority of his career with the New York Yankees. He set records such as being a World Series winner for 10 of those years, and 18 years as an all-star. As a player, coach or manager, Berra appeared in 21 World Series and won 13 of them.

He admirably served his country in World War II, fighting with Allied forces in France during the D-Day landing, and he gave back to others through various philanthropic endeavours.

In addition, he is fondly remembered for his sayings, or, as they have come to be known, Yogi-isms, which have become part of our cultural dialogue. Sayings such as, “It ain’t over till it’s over,” and, “Baseball is 90% mental and the other half is physical”; another one was, “Always go to other people’s funerals; otherwise they won’t come to yours” are still prominently used today.

Yogi Berra’s insight, wisdom and perspective on sports and life will be truly missed.

Mr. Speaker, I would request that a copy of this, on behalf of the Legislature, be sent to the Berra family.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That’s rather interesting. The short answer is that we’ve done it in the past for other families of deceased. I’ll investigate the possibility of forwarding the statement on to the Berra family.

Mr. Mike Colle: Just send it to Yankee Stadium.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It’ll get to the family. Thank you very much.

I thank all members for their comments.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates on the estimates selected and not selected by the standing committee for consideration.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): Ms. DiNovo from the Standing Committee on Estimates presents the committee’s report as follows:

Pursuant to standing order 60 and the order of the House dated September 14, 2015, your committee has selected the estimates 2015-16 of the following ministries and offices for consideration: Ministry of Energy, including supplementaries, 15 hours; Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure and Ministry of Research and Innovation, seven hours, 30 minutes; Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, seven hours, 30 minutes; Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, 15 hours; Ministry of Finance, including supplementaries, 15 hours; Ministry of Education, 15 hours; Office of Francophone Affairs, 15 hours.

Pursuant to standing order 61(a), the estimates 2015-16 of the following ministries and offices not selected for consideration are deemed to be passed by the committee and are reported back to the House: Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs: ministry administration, \$23,202,300; Better Public Health And Environment, \$99,370,000—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Dispense.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: About time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I can’t say it.

I thank the Chair for the report. Pursuant to standing order 61(b), the report of the committee is deemed to be received, and the estimates of the ministries and offices named therein as not being selected for consideration by the committee are deemed to be concurred in.

Report deemed received.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BAYVIEW FARMS AND ENTERPRISES LIMITED ACT, 2015

Ms. Thompson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr28, An Act to revive Bayview Farms and Enterprises Limited.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES
IN MPP CONSTITUENCY
OFFICES ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LES SERVICES
EN FRANÇAIS DANS LES BUREAUX
DE CIRCONSCRIPTION DES DÉPUTÉS

M^{me} Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 123, An Act to amend the French Language Services Act with respect to the provision of services in French / Projet de loi 123, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services en français en ce qui concerne la prestation des services en français.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short comment.

1320

M^{me} France Gélinas: La Loi de 2015 sur les services en français dans les bureaux de circonscription des députés, note explicative :

Quelques articles, dont l'article 1 et 7, et le paragraphe 5(1) de la Loi sur les services en français sont modifiés en vue de rendre cette dernière applicable aux bureaux de circonscription des députés à l'Assemblée législative.

Sections 1 and 7 and subsection 5(1) of the French Language Services Act are amended in order to make the act applicable to constituency offices of members of the Legislative Assembly.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the estate administration tax, also known as the death tax, is levied on assets that have already been taxed; and

"Whereas the value of the estate of a deceased person does not account for debts or liens; and

"Whereas the federal government has set a precedent of creating tax incentives to encourage increased charitable giving to which this provincial tax is contrary; and

"Whereas new requirements for filing the death tax oblige the estate trustees to file a significant amount of documentation and supporting evidence within only 90 days; and

"Whereas the audit and verification authority established by the government is an expensive and unnecessary level of bureaucracy; and

"Whereas the related regulations implemented in January 2015 will negatively impact all estates in Ontario;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To unanimously endorse and quickly pass Bill 120, An Act to amend the Estate Administration Tax Act, 1998, to roll back and cap the death tax and get rid of the punishing deadlines and penalties this government has introduced."

I will sign it and send this over to the desk with page Kelly.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the \$100 ODSP Work-Related Benefit provides a critically important source of funds to people with disabilities on ODSP who work, giving them the ability to pay for much-needed, ongoing work-related expenses such as transportation, clothing, food, personal care and hygiene items, and child care; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Community and Social Services plans to eliminate the Work-Related Benefit as part of a restructuring of OW and ODSP employment benefits, and has said that ongoing work-related expenses will not be covered by its new restructured Employment-Related Benefit; and

"Whereas eliminating the Work-Related Benefit will take approximately \$36 million annually out of the pockets of people with disabilities on ODSP ...; and

"Whereas a survey conducted by the ODSP Action Coalition between December 2014 and February 2015 shows that 18% of respondents who currently receive the Work-Related Benefit fear having to quit their jobs as a result of the loss of this important source of funds; 12.5% fear having to reduce the amount of money they spend on food, or rely on food banks; and 10% fear losing the ability to travel, due to the cost of transportation; and

"Whereas people receiving ODSP already struggle to get by, and incomes on ODSP provide them with little or no ability to cover these costs from regular benefits; and

"Whereas undermining employment among ODSP recipients would run directly counter to the ministry's" stated "goal of increasing employment and the provincial government's" so-called "poverty reduction goal of increasing income security;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the provincial government's plan to eliminate the ODSP Work-Related Benefit."

I couldn't agree more. I'm going to sign it and give it to Laura to be delivered to the desk.

TAXATION

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Estate Administration Tax, also known as the death tax, is levied on assets that have already been taxed; and

"Whereas the value of the estate of a deceased person does not" exceed nor "account for debts or liens; and

"Whereas the federal government has set a precedent of creating tax incentives to encourage increased charitable giving to which this provincial tax is contrary; and,

"Whereas new requirements for filing the death tax oblige the estate trustees to file a significant amount of documentation and supporting evidence within only 90 days; and

"Whereas the audit and verification authority established by the government is an expensive and unnecessary level of bureaucracy; and

"Whereas the related regulations implemented in January 2015 will negatively" affect and "impact all estates in Ontario;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To unanimously endorse and quickly pass Bill 120, An Act to amend the Estate Administration Tax Act, 1998, to roll back and cap the death tax and get rid of the punishing deadlines and penalties this government has introduced."

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature and send it down with Grace.

SOLAR FARM

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have hundreds and hundreds of names that were collected by Cairin Nelson from my riding for a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas SkyPower is proposing to clear-cut 70-plus acres of fully forested land in order to erect a ground-mount solar farm ... called the MaxLight project on Kenneth Drive in Val Therese, Ontario" in my riding;

"Whereas the proposed site is classified as wetland, and contains a number of species-at-risk (whippoorwill, bobolink, Blanding's turtle, bald eagle, peregrine falcon, Eastern white wolf, nighthawk), along with a vast array of other plant and animal life;

"Whereas the proposed site exists between established homes, and among homes which were purchased on the basis of existing land forms; abutting property owners, the" City of Greater Sudbury "GCS planning committee, and the landowners themselves oppose the clearing of a very viable forest in favour of ground-mount photovoltaic cells;

"Whereas industrial/commercial projects such as the MaxLight ... solar farm belong on already degraded and unpopulated lands, away from residential housing," which is really common in Nickel Belt;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"Stop the MaxLight project" in Hanmer, in Greater Sudbury, "on Kenneth Drive in Val Therese."

I'm happy to present this for Mrs. Cairin Nelson and I will give it to Siena to bring to the Clerk.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we, as parents, strive to ensure our disabled family members with complex needs can live their lives safely, securely and with dignity;

"Whereas Passport funding through the efforts of the Select Committee on Developmental Services has been a financial lift for some families to enable their disabled family members to have fuller lives in their communities, however it does not provide 24/7 care and living accommodations;

"Whereas the worry of the future for our disabled family members without us clouds all other aspects of our daily lives;

"Whereas we believe our disabled family members require group home living in our local communities to ensure our peace of mind now and their well-being when we are gone;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Honourable Helena Jaczek, in her capacity as Minister of Community and Social Services, act immediately to create legislation to mandate group homes in our local communities for developmentally disabled adult children with complex needs."

I'll attach my signature to this petition and send it to the table with Wendy.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Catherine Fife: "Privatizing Hydro One: Another wrong choice.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas once you privatize Hydro One, there's no return; and

"Whereas we'll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

"Whereas we'll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

"Whereas we'll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like" in other jurisdictions;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come."

It's my pleasure to affix my signature and give this petition to page Kelly.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"In light of the many wide-ranging concerns being raised by Ontario citizens and 80-plus action groups across Ontario and the irrefutable international evidence

of a flawed technology, health concerns, environmental effects, bird and bat kills, property losses,” families fighting friends and communities, tearing them apart, “and unprecedented costs;

1330

“We, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to declare an Ontario-wide moratorium on the development of wind farms.”

I agree with this petition. I'll affix my signature and send it to the table with Alexander.

DENTAL CARE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas thousands and thousands of adults live with pain and infection because they cannot afford dental care;

“Whereas the promised \$45-million dental fund under the Poverty Reduction Strategy excluded impoverished adults;

“Whereas the programs were designed with rigid criteria so that most of the people in need do not qualify; and

“Whereas desperately needed dental care money went unspent and was diverted to other areas even though people are still suffering without access to dental care;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Legislative Assembly do all in its power to stop the dental fund being diverted to support other programs; and

“That the Legislative Assembly fully utilize the commissioned funding to provide dental care to those in need.”

I couldn't agree more. I'm going to give this to Krishaj to be delivered to the table.

CONCUSSION

Mr. John Fraser: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the rate of concussions among children and youth has increased significantly from 2003 to 2011, from 466 to 754 per 100,000 for boys, and from 208 to 440 per 100,000 for girls; and

“Whereas hard falls and the use of force, often found in full-contact sports such as hockey and rugby, have been found to be the cause of over half of all hospital visits for pediatric concussions; and

“Whereas the signs and the symptoms of concussions can be difficult to identify unless coaches, mentors, youth and parents have been educated to recognize them; and

“Whereas preventative measures, such as ... return-to-play for young athletes who have suspected concussions, as well as preventative education and awareness, have been found to significantly decrease the danger of serious or fatal injuries; and

“Whereas Bill 39, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to concussions, was introduced in 2012 but never passed; and

“Whereas 49 recommendations to increase awareness, training and education around concussions were made by a jury after the coroner's inquest into the concussion death of Rowan Stringer;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Ontario government review and adopt Rowan's Law to ensure the safety and health of children and youth ... across the province.”

I agree with this petition. I'm going to affix my signature and give it to page Gabriel.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My understanding is, this is International aHUS Awareness Day. It's my pleasure to present the following petition:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Soliris for patients with atypical hemolytic uremic syndrome (aHUS), an ultra-rare, chronic and life-threatening genetic condition that progressively damages vital organs, leading to heart attack, stroke and kidney failure; and

“Whereas Soliris, the first and only pharmaceutical treatment in Canada for the treatment of aHUS, has allowed patients to discontinue plasma and dialysis therapies, and has been shown to improve kidney function and enable successful kidney transplant; and

“Whereas the lack of public funding for Soliris is especially burdensome on the families of Ontario children and adults battling this catastrophic disease;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Instruct the Ontario government to immediately provide Soliris as a choice to patients with atypical hemolytic uremic syndrome and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding.”

I agree with this petition. I'll affix my signature and send it to the table with Anna.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have thousands of names that have been gathered on this petition par Madame Rachelle Brouillette, from Azilda in my riding. It reads as follows:

“Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

“Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

“Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas price regulation; and

“Whereas jurisdictions with gas price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of

price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to: “Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Siena to bring it to the Clerk.

LUNG DISEASE

Ms. Daiene Vernile: This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children. Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

“In the Ontario Lung Association report, *Your Lungs, Your Life*, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry’s private member’s bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

“Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage.”

I very much agree with this important piece of legislation. I will sign it and hand it to page Grace.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time for petitions has expired.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

ESTATE ADMINISTRATION TAX FAIRNESS ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 CONCERNANT L'ÉQUITÉ DE L'IMPÔT SUR L'ADMINISTRATION DES SUCCESSIONS

Mr. McNaughton moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 120, An Act to amend the Estate Administration Tax Act, 1998 / Projet de loi 120, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 de l’impôt sur l’administration des successions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

The member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have introduced this bill, Bill 120, the Estate Administration Tax Fairness Act, because I believe we need to overhaul the estate administration tax in Ontario.

I looked at the changes that the government brought into force on January 1, listened to the dissatisfaction of stakeholders and the anger of constituents, and it became clear that this tax is taking us in the wrong direction.

We continue to complicate our tax system, making it more difficult to navigate for families and small businesses that don’t have the benefit of expensive legal counsel. It’s not fair and it’s not right. This is a tax on assets that the government has already collected a lifetime of taxes on. Grieving families trying to settle the affairs of their loved ones have new harsh deadlines and penalties hanging over their heads.

When this tax was reviewed and modified by the government, it’s clear that compassion and sensitivity were not top of mind. Instead, they doubled down on the death tax and made changes to prioritize the bottom line in getting their cut of the estate as quickly as possible. I think we need to take a long, hard look at this tax in particular and try to bring some compassion and common sense to it so we can give some relief to Ontario families.

The first thing my bill does is it proposes to cap the estate administration tax. Ontario wins the silver medal for the highest death tax in Canada, and I don’t think that’s a distinction that we want. In Alberta the cap is \$400. In Quebec you won’t pay much more than \$100. So a \$3,250 cap is certainly not out of line.

1340

We talk a lot in this House about supporting Ontario’s small businesses and farmers. We appreciate the contributions they make to our economy, and no one here ever hesitates to applaud them. But how about actually doing something to support them?

This tax is extremely punishing for family farms and family-owned businesses. When you have spent a lifetime incrementally building a business, acquiring assets that allow you to grow and hire more people, you accumulate the vehicles, buildings and other property that the government will be taxing when you die. These illiquid assets can give rise to a death tax amounting to many tens of thousands of dollars. Who usually suffers most from this tax? Families whose assets are tied up in the buildings and machinery that provide their livelihood. Farmers may have equipment and property worth millions, but they can still be cash-poor. So when the finance minister comes looking to collect tens of thousands of dollars’ worth of tax after the head of the family passes away, there is no available cash. I’m not saying that it’s the death tax alone that causes this, but it

aggravates the situation because that family is going to be simultaneously dealing with capital gains tax and income tax. Spouses and children are often left to sell the family business to cover these tax bills. I think we should be ashamed, as legislators in Ontario, that this sort of situation is not uncommon, and that we contribute to it. Families that are job creators, that have worked hard, contributed to Ontario's economy and built lives around the farm or family business, have to face losing a loved one and then dealing with losing their livelihood.

Let's not forget this is a tax on property for which the deceased has already paid taxes.

I believe a cap of \$3,250 is very reasonable and would go a long way to limiting the harm of this tax. It's also important to note that this tax is levied on total estate value.

This total does not account for the debts of the deceased. Again, I hope this government realizes an estate can have assets and still be cash-poor. This bill would ensure the amount of tax payable would be based on the net value of the estate and take into account encumbrances, the debts and liens, that are associated with one's estate.

I think that exempting estates valued at under \$50,000 from paying this tax is another much-needed change we can make to show compassion and offer some relief.

This government wants to pretend that this is about a tax cut for the rich, but the fact of the matter is that this tax currently can be levied on anyone who has property worth over \$1,000. If all you have to your name is a beat-up 1997 Honda Civic, the government could still go after your estate to get its cut. So for the government to claim that this is about a tax cut for the rich is absolutely ridiculous. They should be embarrassed by how out of touch they are with their own policies and how they affect the people of Ontario.

I'd also like to point out that this bill would exempt charitable donations from the death tax. If someone wants to leave all or a portion of their estate to a local charity, I think it's ludicrous for a government to be collecting tax from that. The charitable bequests of the dead are just not the place to go looking for quick cash. I think we should show some respect and encourage people to put money back into their local economies and give to worthy causes.

The bottom line here is that it's a bad tax at a bad time for families. When someone has passed away after a lifetime of paying taxes, this government takes that as another opportunity to collect taxes and the grieving family that's left has to deal with it.

I think we can all agree in this House that this is a vulgar, heartless tax. It's really quite tragic that the government has dug the province into the sort of financial hole that drives them to not only continue to collect over \$143 million annually from grieving families, but to implement measures to crack down on estate trustees who don't get information to the ministry quickly enough or who make a mistake in their filing. Who would take the job of being an estate trustee, with the threat of

thousands of dollars in fines or even jail time hanging over their heads? Instead of spending responsibly, or not wasting money like we have seen this government do with gas plants, MaRS and Pan Am bonuses, the government always comes back to wringing every cent possible out of Ontario taxpayers.

Now there are appropriate, legitimate means of avoiding this tax: strategies such as naming of beneficiaries, joint tenancy with right of survivorship, use of multiple wills, alter ego trusts and the use of living trusts. These strategies are all legal, but they open vulnerable people up to a lot of risk. A person of modest means who can't afford good legal advice may create some serious legal problems for themselves and loved ones. These financial manoeuvres can leave our senior citizens vulnerable to exploitation.

As I said before, this is a tax that punishes the people who can't afford good legal counsel. It punishes the people who don't go looking for loopholes and it punishes the grieving families who quite often only learn there is such a thing as the estate administration tax in the days after losing a loved one. So this tax actually falls inordinately on the shoulders of the middle- and lower-income classes.

The people of this province already pay taxes their entire lives. We pay taxes on all of our hard work, on all of our savings, our income and investments. We also pay taxes on the things we buy and cherish, whether it's the car in the garage or the painting on the wall. The people of Ontario recognize the importance of paying taxes to pay for the services we all value and to support our most vulnerable, but this morbid tax means we are being taxed to death, at death and after death. The death tax amounts to a tax on a lifetime of hard work and sacrifices. It punishes people who have worked hard their entire lives to build something from the ground up, whether it's a home, a small business or the family farm. A person's assets should be kept in the family for their children and spouses or for charitable causes that they hold dear. They should not be taxed and then re-taxed by a government that, quite frankly, squanders its revenues.

Ultimately, this is a tax that I think we should be doing away with altogether, but I recognize the realities of working in a majority government. I hope that the measures I have proposed here will be thoughtfully considered by all parties so we can work together to give Ontario families some relief from the financial and emotional burden that this tax is imposing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I think that this actually is a very important debate to be having in the province of Ontario right now. We have to look at the context of why this debate has come to the floor at this time in the province of Ontario. In order to fully understand how these new tight deadlines came into effect, just this past January 2015, and how they were introduced with little warning and have only managed to create a more onerous and expensive estate administration process, we will be

focusing particularly on the 90-day window to file a detailed description of the deceased's assets. Sanctions for failure to comply with this tight timeline have only made an often difficult situation more challenging for the average Ontarian.

I do think it's important for us to acknowledge, if people in this House have not gone through this process, that it is a painful process, Mr. Speaker. The closing of an estate, the settling of the estate, dealing with the lawyers, the real estate agents, the bankers—that is an important part of the closure for grief. It's a step that you have to go through in order to move forward. The emotional labour associated with this process, having recently just gone through this experience with my husband's family, is an emotional, laborious process which is incredibly painful.

But in order to fully understand why we're here today, we have to set our sights back to 2011, actually. The background is that the estate administration tax has been charged on the total value of the deceased's estate. It was updated by the Liberals in the 2011 budget. It has taken this long for them to move forward with that. At the time, we did not support the 2011 budget put forward by the Liberals. The changes at the time include—and I think that this is important because many people do not even know that this is happening right now in the province of Ontario. That's why I thank the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex for bringing it forward.

The changes are as follows: The total value of the estate is the value of all assets owned by the deceased at the time of the death, including real estate in Ontario less encumbrances; bank accounts; investments, including stocks, bonds, trust units, options; vehicles and vessels, like cars or trucks or ATVs, and all property of the deceased which was held in another person's name; and all other property, wherever situated, including goods, intangible property, business interests, and insurance, if the proceeds pass through the estate—for example, there's no named beneficiary other than “estate.”

1350

If a court issued a certificate of appointment of estate trustee with a will limited to the assets referred to the will, only those assets included in the will are to be included.

You can see: This is legalese. The average person in the province of Ontario faces an uphill battle. It's a steep learning curve.

We do share the concerns of the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex that 90 days is a timeline that is completely unworkable. All of us across this province—over the last summer—I'm sure that you've heard from people who are completely unaware of this process until they have to go through it.

It's also worth noting that the assets held before death but not at the time of death, such as insurance payable to a named beneficiary, assets where there is a joint ownership with the right of survivorship, and real estate outside of Ontario are not included in the value of the estate.

Prior to the changes, it was permissible to provide a total valuation of the deceased's estate. This is one of the issues that the member is trying to get to.

The current tax formula, for those who are watching, including my mom, is as follows: It's \$5 for each \$1,000, or part thereof, of the first \$50,000 of the value of the estate; and \$15 for each \$1,000, or part thereof, of the value of the estate exceeding \$50,000. What Bill 120 would do is cap the estate tax at \$325,000 and exempt estates worth \$50,000 or less—currently exempted estates are worth \$1,000 or less—and would exclude charitable gifts from the value of the estate.

The two key issues with the bill's cap provisions: The member has put forward amendments that, unfortunately, don't consider the possibility of tax shelters. Government estimates have an estate worth \$240,000 paying only \$3,100 in taxes—less than the cap proposed by the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. This means, potentially, that wealthy individual estates, and not just elites but a sizable cohort of upper-middle earners, could well exceed the \$240,000 cited by the government but still only pay slightly more than the average Ontarian under the \$325,000 cap sought by the goal of this bill.

The other change that Bill 120 would bring in is a return to pre-2011 changes, when the overall value of estates were estimated rather than itemized. The itemization of these assets is an important part of the process, Mr. Speaker.

The point that we do support in this bill is removing the 90-day deadline requirement on reporting estate assets, a regulatory requirement in force since the beginning of this year, 2015. The government could do this through regulation. They created the 90-day period of time where families are supposed to deal with the grief of a parent or a guardian and go through the lawyer and go through the probate process. In many respects, these changes would potentially dissuade somebody from wanting to be an executor. I think it's worth noting that funeral directors from across the province have raised this concern with this House. They posted a public letter in the spring. Ninety days is a very short window, Mr. Speaker, to settle an estate. It's a very complex process.

As the finance critic, I'm always trying to follow the money in this place. I think that there was an original rationale that this process would help with the estate administration of this tax. So in some respects, I anticipate that the government was looking to generate some money to help with the administration of the tax, which I quite honestly would see this process—the oversight that would be needed to ensure that there was some credibility and some integrity throughout the process would be quite onerous. We could, quite honestly, see an Auditor General's report on this whole process. You look at the Auditor General's report this week on the CCACs. The government and the CCAC associations never did a financial assessment of value for money. They didn't know that those investments were actually benefiting patient care. This process is incredibly complex and incredibly layered.

It was suggested by the member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex that this entire process—I was quite surprised. He estimates that it brings in \$143 million annually through estate tax at the administration process. This is a hard number to track down. I wasn't able actually to verify that that much money does come into the province.

The government rationale in introducing the changes back in the 2011 budget was that there was revenue lost through overall estimates on the worth of the estate. So the government essentially wasn't trustworthy, if you will, of the people who were going through this process. I think, having just gone through it, it is an incredibly detailed process, itemizing all those goods and services, and getting a full audit of the estate, and once that happens, the government does know what we have, which, I take it, is quite unsettling for some people.

The Liberal government will maintain that they aren't changing the rates, so it's just how the process is being conducted and how the tax is being collected. But I can tell you that, based on the people who have come forward from my constituency, this has not helped the process of settling estates. In fact, it has complicated it greatly.

Also, it begs the question: Why no communication? There are commercials out there right now on the new sex ed curriculum. There are commercials every hour, on the hour, on the ORPP. This is a significant change in policy—it really is. It certainly warrants a stronger communication strategy from the government so that the citizens of this province fully understand what they're going to be dealing with. One has to wonder why that hasn't happened.

The reason that we essentially cannot support this private member's bill is that it doesn't truly get at some of the concerns that we have as a party. It hasn't done enough to allay the concerns that the proposed changes to the estate tax administration would favour the estates of the wealthiest individuals in what would amount to a tax shelter.

It's unfortunate that we're sort of squeezed on this—because we've listened to our constituents and we've heard their concerns. There was an opportunity here to ensure that that piece of legislation captures those who actually have the resources, the powers and the lawyers to hide their money. We believe in tax fairness in the province of Ontario.

So it certainly doesn't address our concerns around the possibility of tax shelters. I think, going back and reading through the original bill, that was some of the motivation to change and to update and modernize the administration tax fairness. We do think that this entire process can be made certainly more family-friendly, if you will, for those people who are going through the process.

As I said, it's an important step in the grieving process. We're going to continue to push the government to be more flexible around the timelines. Certainly, the fees and possible jail time for those who do not comply is incredibly harsh and also hard to oversee and hard to hold to account. The openness and transparency have not been evident on this change, this regulatory change that

came forward in January 2015. Really, it's a missed opportunity to demonstrate that this government understands what families are going through when they have someone in their family pass away.

Thank you for your time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's a pleasure to rise and speak to this important issue. I have to say that, as I was listening to the member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, I was thinking about my own family circumstances. I remember my mother having to assist family members with their estates. That is a painful process. It's difficult.

1400

I never had this conversation with members of my family who have passed before they passed, but knowing them—certainly my grandparents—and knowing how strongly they felt that they had earned their savings over time because of their hard work, but also because of the opportunities that this country and their community provided them with, they would have understood that to pay for the services, to pay for the things that supported that prosperity, sometimes taxes like these are required, as painful as they may be for members of the family to administer.

What is interesting, too, as I was listening to the member, is that he suggested today, but also in past sessions of the Legislature, that this is a tax that has been imposed by this government. What's interesting is that I started to do some research, and it turns out that it was actually Premier Mike Harris who introduced the EAT, the estate administration tax, which I found interesting. It was not this government. In fact, no one pays a dollar more now than under Mike Harris. That, to me, was a revelation and I thought an important clarification because the dialogue from the member has been quite the opposite.

The other thing I wanted to clarify is that we've been talking about recent developments, and there hasn't been the introduction of a new tax on estates—there simply has not been; that's simply not factual—nor has the government changed the amount of estate administration tax payable or the way it's calculated, even. In the 2011 budget, what the government did do is it made a commitment to enhance compliance.

One tool for this is an EAT regulation. This new regulation helps to ensure that the Ministry of Finance has the information that it needs to perform audits and verify that correct amounts of the tax have been paid. Just to clarify, the regulation requires estate representatives, trustees, executors etc. to submit an estate information return to the Ministry of Finance with information to substantiate the total estate value provided to the courts.

What this is is a requirement that people who are involved in the administration of the estate disclose the information to assess what the taxes that are payable are in an accurate manner. That's not changing taxes or raising taxes; that just means that people are doing what's necessary to ensure that people are paying the amount of tax that is owed.

I file paperwork every year when I file my income taxes. It's a requirement, and I understand that it's a requirement because if I weren't to do that, we wouldn't be able to assess how much tax I need to pay every year.

The regulation is effective for applications for estate certificates made on or after January 1, 2015. The regulation does not change the court process. Estate representatives will continue to pay EAT and file EAT-related court forms to the courts.

Tackling tax avoidance is a key strategy as part of a robust and transparent administration process. I wanted to speak to that because there's been the suggestion that somehow we've changed the tax or raised the tax. That is not the case. It's simply the case that we're taking the steps to make sure that the taxes that are payable are collected accurately. I wanted to clarify that.

Addressing the issue of tax avoidance is important. It's important not just from a fiscal perspective, but from the perspective of fairness. We all live in our wonderful society and our wonderful communities. We all enjoy the benefits of the services that are provided through those taxes, whether that be health care, education, whatever it may be. We all need to follow the rules and we need to pay the taxes that we owe. This is just about making sure that that's what happens.

The bill that's been presented by the member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex sets an arbitrary cap. The tax code is a complex thing; it's a complicated thing. Modifying it requires careful consideration and consultation. The limit proposed—I don't know how the member chose the limit, but it seems like an arbitrary cap. Things that he didn't raise in his presentation were things like what would be the impact on our economy, what would be the impact on—taxes interact. Has he considered that element of it? Has he considered the fiscal impact?

The member opposite has talked in the past about how there are services that are needed in his community that the government should provide. But to provide for services, we require taxes to be paid. This would be lowering taxes, and he hasn't addressed that point. These are all issues that need to be thought about as part of the process of determining what the appropriate level of tax should be.

Again, I want to clarify: We haven't raised the tax or changed the tax; we're just enforcing the EAT that was put in place by Premier Mike Harris—Conservative Premier Mike Harris.

Thank you, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak to this issue.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Let me say off the top of the time I have that I want to congratulate the member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex for bringing this bill forward. We all get just one kick at the cat, if you will, when it comes to private members' bills, and members will use that in different ways as to what their priorities are.

Mr. McNaughton, the member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, took the too rare approach of actually bring-

ing forward a bill that is substantive. It is thoughtful, it is well-drafted, it is timely and it impacts the lives of everyday Ontarians. Every family, sadly, will have to cope with this type of circumstance. I always think it is important to congratulate a member, whatever side of the House they sit on, when they take the time to do the research on a substantive, impactful and timely bill, and that's certainly what this is.

When it comes to tax policy, one always has to consider: When you're raising revenue, what kind of signals do you send to people paying the taxes into the economy as a whole? For example, most of us approve of the fact that there are high taxes on tobacco, because you want to discourage tobacco use. Sales taxes are often referred to as income taxes because they will encourage more investment and less consumption as a way of raising revenue. Income taxes in Ontario and Canada tend to be progressive in nature: The higher the income, the higher the rate of tax you pay.

Mr. McNaughton brings up a very important point: Why do we have a death tax to begin with? All of the assets that are taxed have in fact already come after taxes were paid on income or on a purchase. You are effectively taxing, a second time, assets that an individual or family had owned. So it makes a good philosophical question.

He has approached this in a balanced manner. He recognizes that the members of the other two parties may not support that, so he brought forward something that is in the realm of possibility: lowering that tax. I thought his approach was a very thoughtful one, where he said that estates of, I think, \$50,000 value or lower—families of quite modest means—should be tax-exempt.

Charitable donations as well should be tax-exempt. I think that is laudable, and hopefully we will see members of the other two parties agree with at least that, and then a staged taxation process after that. He could have gone, "Get rid of the tax," but he recognized that other members would not have voted for that. I hope they will support this; I think it's wise.

I think we need to look back on this and make sure that those following this debate understand the true history. The members of the government party are being a bit superficial or reckless, or maybe they're just having fun, saying that this was a brand new tax brought in by Premier Harris. Well, that is not accurate. There was a long-standing probate for execution of an estate that effectively worked as a tax, as opposed to an administrative fee, but it is called a probate.

There is a court hearing. The previous Bob Rae government had increased that probate fee. I think they tripled it as a tax grab. The Harris government responded to a court hearing to make it clear and transparent as a tax. We didn't bring this in; it had existed for some time. You can make the point that we should have eliminated it at that point in time, in which case you must vote for Mr. McNaughton's bill if you feel that is the best thing to do, and I hope you will. But we lowered taxes in other ways, including the most dramatic reduction in personal income

tax anywhere in this country and the lowering of business taxes to encourage investments. So we chose other tax routes.

Here we are today, and what the current government has done is two things: They have brought in a punishing and, quite frankly, cruel 90-day time frame. Thank God I've not had to go through this with an immediate family member; members here probably have. You can understand that the grieving period you go through is a shock, and there is an administrative burden on the spouse, the daughter, the son—whoever is the executor. To force them with threats of significant fines or jail time to complete that process in 90 days I think is cruel. Whether the government thought through it at the time is not of consequence; I'm not going to try to create an issue there, other than to say fix it. I think all of us would reasonably agree that 90 days for a grieving family, to force them to do this, is cruel and should be fixed.

1410

They did also effectively increase the tax; they increased the death tax. I know they'll debate that, but here's how they did it. Previously, the tax had been administered by the net value. You would take the gross value of the assets, you would remove any debts that were owing to get a net value, and a tax was based on that value. They changed that, and now it's on the gross, so effectively, you're taxing at a higher rate.

Not only did you put on a cruel time frame, you increased the death tax. All Mr. McNaughton, the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, is asking you to do is fix that, the 90-day time frame, and to allow for charitable donations, to allow for a low-income exemption and a capped level of taxation. I think that's fair, I think that's balanced; I think that's reasonable and will deflect what I think is an extraordinary lack of compassion in the current system.

It's not just me, Speaker. I received, as my colleagues in all parties have, I'm sure, correspondence from constituents concerned about this. A woman named Dorothy—I'll keep her last name confidential—from Grimsby: When she first heard about this change, she thought that she was mistaken, that she had been given wrong information. She was surprised, and she contacted me to say, how could our elected officials bring forth such a draconian measure? She is a senior citizen. She was planning her own family's affairs when this came into her orbit. She asked me to act, as a member, and I'm pleased to be one of those speaking on behalf of supporting the bill here today. Another of my constituents, Robin, also from west Niagara, was shocked at the 90-day time frame and asked that that be removed.

I commend my colleague. I think that it's a very fair, reasonable, balanced approach. I do hope that we'll have all the members of the assembly pass this bill into law.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I'm pleased to rise in the Legislature this afternoon to speak to the private member's bill from the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

I've also heard from some of my constituents in Etobicoke-Lakeshore about this. They have heard about this; they've had questions. I've been able to reassure them that the amount of tax has not changed, the way in which we collect the tax hasn't really changed, but what we're going to do is ensure more tax fairness, to ensure that those who should pay a tax which has been legislated for a number of years will pay it and not more easily find ways to avoid paying tax—which has been a law of this province for a number of years now.

I can share with the Legislature that, unfortunately, I have had to deal with estates in my family three times in my life. One time was in Nova Scotia. I can't be certain about this, but it seemed to me that the amount of probate fees was actually higher than in Ontario. It was quite a number of years ago, Mr. Speaker; I might not be exactly correct on this, but it was not a small amount—and it was a relatively straightforward estate. It was not unlike much of what we're dealing with here.

Also, in the cases of my own parents when they passed away, in the first case, when my dad passed away—my mom was still alive—there were no real issues because everything passes on to the spouse. In those circumstances, you don't really need to go through probate; you don't need to go through complex mechanisms, and that's still the case. I think for most Ontarians, actually—unfortunately when they have a loved one pass away—there will not be complicated procedures dealing with estates and so on; they'll be pretty straightforward. There are a number of times when you don't have to go through this process, especially when there is a spouse. So, Mr. Speaker, let's not search for a solution to a problem that doesn't exist.

I do want to speak to the member's private member's bill. As was stated earlier, the government did introduce these changes in 2011 to a tax that had already been on the books for a number of years. The changes are about the regulations, to make sure that there is more tax fairness, to make sure that those who should pay a tax that has been on the books pay it, that they pay it fairly, that they don't pay more than they should. That is the case. So we're not changing the amount, we're not changing the way in which it is calculated, and it's not a new tax on estates.

I know that when you go through a death in the family, it is stressful, whether it's something that could have been foreseen or something that is sudden. But I can also tell you, Mr. Speaker, that those of us who have gone through that know full well that within the first 90 days you will have to deal with giving notice of cancelling leases, perhaps; you have to notify the federal government about stopping Canada Pension Plan payments or Old Age Security payments; you have to deal with the bank. There are a number of things that you have to deal with well in advance of the first 90 days anyway. So I actually do not think this is onerous and, as I said, in most cases the assets are relatively simple, what's going on with an estate is relatively simple and this is not an onerous case.

I have heard today in the Legislature that you have to settle an estate in 90 days. Now, I don't know what those members who use those words were thinking about, but to me, settling an estate is about paying all of the taxes that might be payable, including capital gains taxes and others, having complex wills dealt with, having a number of beneficiaries. Those things don't happen in 90 days; those things can last years in some cases. This is simply about administratively submitting a valuation of the estate within 90 days. It's not about settling estates. It's not about creating onerous demands on people at a time when they are grieving.

So, Mr. Speaker, I do not support the member's private member's bill. I give him full credit for working hard on this, but he is seeking a solution to a problem that doesn't exist, or if it does, then he should have opposed the tax that the provincial Conservative government implemented a number of years ago.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate. The member for Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker, for the opportunity to rise to speak in support of this private member's bill.

As I've said many, many times in this Legislature, we like to record a lot of these things, not just for posterity, but for the benefit of all Ontarians. What I am about to talk about can be found in the latest issue of Fedeli Focus on Finance, which you can find online at fedeli.com. I'd like to continue to share that as I do on every opportunity that I can, especially when Mr. Miller is in the chair.

On January 1 of this year, changes to Ontario's estate administration tax quietly came into force. In the months that have since passed, Ontarians slowly became aware of the impacts of these changes. Unfortunately, they occur at one of the most difficult periods in people's lives, and that is after the passing of a loved one.

I want to give absolute acknowledgment and credit to the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex in bringing this private member's bill. We only get one member's bill at a session, Speaker, and he put a lot of thought and a lot of time into developing this, thinking it through, for a bill that would be most important to not only his constituents but to the constituents throughout Ontario. So I commend and congratulate the member for bringing this important issue as his one and only private member's bill—good use of the bill.

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Again, Speaker, the government has acted before fully considering the implications of a policy change. Originally, the estate administration tax was not a tax. Rather, it was a probate needed to be acquired by the executor of an estate.

This fee was directly tied to property. It was tripled, incidentally, by the NDP government in 1992 to get more revenue. You remember those days, not unlike today, where we had horrible deficits? They tripled that rate back then. The rate became \$5 for every \$1,000 worth of property, up to \$50,000 total property, and \$15 for every \$1,000 worth of property past that threshold.

Because of the tripling of costs, people began to find ways to avoid paying the tax. In 1995, the word "probate" was changed to "certificate of appointment of an estate trustee." That was it. In 1998, a Supreme Court of Canada case ruled that the probate fee actually constituted a tax and it was directly tied to the amount of property and not the probate service being provided. Thus, the government of the day changed the probate fee name to a direct tax on a deceased's property. However, the then Mike Harris government of the day kept the rates the same as the probate fee to make the change neutral. It was a name change. I know that this is a correction of many of the things you've heard earlier in this Legislature, Speaker, but we stand by the Hansard records of the day.

In 2011, then-Finance Minister Dwight Duncan targeted people who were avoiding the tax and committed to new regulations to ensure that the values that people were declaring in their certificate applications were accurate and that everyone was paying their tax. These were approved in the 2011 budget, but were incidentally opposed by the PCs, the official opposition of that day.

In 2014, Finance Minister Charles Sousa did go to further change the regulations around the estate administration tax to shorten the amount of time to file information and pay the fees within 90 days. Minister Sousa also made it so that more information was required and the executor had 30 days to respond. If the executor did not reply, a fine could be issued. Those penalties are capped at twice the owed tax or two years in prison. These are fundamentally the changes that were made.

Specifically, there are worries that the short 90-day reporting deadline will make people more hesitant to accept the important role of acting as an executor, and the stress and potential penalties for failing to meet the new requirements will make a difficult time even worse for grieving family members.

Speaker, this was done by regulation. This never came to this Legislature. There was no debate. Therefore, again I congratulate the member for bringing this to the people of Ontario and hope that this government is not going to continue to tax those even after their death.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I thank everyone for their comments.

I now return to the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. You have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you very much, Speaker. It was great to highlight this issue for the people of Ontario.

I'd like to thank my colleagues from Niagara West-Glanbrook, Nipissing, Kitchener-Waterloo, Etobicoke-Lakeshore and Etobicoke Centre for adding to the debate.

I was quite clear, Mr. Speaker, that I think this is the worst tax we have in Ontario. Families and people have paid a lifetime of taxes on these assets. There shouldn't be a death tax in Ontario. It's the worst way to raise \$143 million in this province.

I did bring forward this bill in the way I did because I think it's a reasonable approach. I actually think that all

members are hearing from their constituents. They know that there need to be some things fixed. I think, as legislators, we should be standing on the side of families and bringing forward ideas and supporting initiatives that bring tax relief for people in Ontario, especially when it comes to the estate administration tax.

A few key components of my bill, again, for all members to consider are that any estate \$50,000 or less would be tax-exempt from the estate administration tax, portions of estates going to charity to help our communities would also be tax-exempt and there would be a cap—the most that estates would pay is \$3,250.

I urge all members to pass my bill, Bill 120, Estate Administration Tax Fairness Act, 2015. Let's get it to committee. We can talk about it, discuss it more and bring even further improvements.

At this time, I'd like to introduce to the Legislature a friend of mine, Barry Corbin, who has been a strong voice in reforming the estate administration tax in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. We will take the vote on this item at the end of private members' public business.

GENDER-NEUTRAL LANGUAGE

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Mr. Glenn Thibeault: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should replace gendered terminology with gender-neutral and inclusive language on all government forms as they are updated, amended, created, or replaced, in order to reflect the diverse nature of our province, including, but not limited to replacing the terms “mother” or “father” with terms such as “parent” or “guardian” to better recognize the rights of LGBTQ parents, and others.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Thibeault has moved private members' notice of motion 56. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: I'm very pleased to rise today to present the following motion:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should replace gendered terminology with gender-neutral and inclusive language on all government forms as they are updated, amended, created, or replaced, in order to reflect the diverse nature of our province, including, but not limited to replacing the terms “mother” or “father” with terms such as “parent” or “guardian” to better recognize the rights of LGBTQ parents, and others.

The language that is used on government forms is not something that most people think about on a day-to-day basis. It was first brought to my attention by a constituent of mine when she was trying to enrol her child in school. As a single mother, she had noticed that when she was filling out the school's enrolment forms, they had a space for mother and a space for father. But she wasn't the last person to speak to me about this issue. Especially here

today, thinking about it, I know that I am very fortunate that I have an incredible wife and two amazing daughters, so for me and for a lot of other parents like me, filling out this form would be an innocuous occurrence. You would write your name on one line and your spouse's or partner's name on another, and that would be it. But for my constituent, it was a reminder that she was a single parent and that being a single parent makes her feel different. It's a reminder to single parents, to divorced parents, or queer or transgender parents that they and the way they are raising their child is not what is considered to be normal. But it is, and that is why I don't think that was okay.

C'était le premier ministre Pierre Elliott Trudeau qui a dit, en décembre 1967, à la Chambre des communes, que l'État n'a rien à faire dans la chambre à coucher de la nation. That's a principle that I hold strongly, that it's not the government's place to define a particular relationship or a particular identity as normal. Instead, the government should use language that is inclusive and that recognizes Ontario's diversity.

My staff and I reviewed the government of Ontario central forms repository, met with stakeholders and spoke to government ministries about this motion. We found that there are already a number of forms that are consistent with the spirit of this motion and use gender-neutral language. For instance, OSAP registration forms request information on parent 1 and parent 2, and several others use the phrase “parent or guardian,” so it certainly is possible for government forms to use gender-neutral language.

1430

But there remain a number of examples of government forms to which this motion would apply. I've already mentioned school registration forms as an example, Mr. Speaker. For instance, the form to apply for a child's name change asks for details about who the child's father is and who the child's mother is. When someone consents to give their child up for adoption and fills out the acknowledgement-of-adoption placement forms, they have to identify whether or not the mother and father have consented to allow their child to be adopted. In these cases, the government could ask for the parents' information or be more specific and ask for the biological parents' information instead, if need be. It would provide the government with the same information that the form currently has but using terminology that is more relevant to the diversity that exists in today's society.

Under the status quo, people can cross out terms like “mother” and “father” and write in what they would prefer to be used, but it requires them to self-identify to the government as being different from the norm. To be clear, this motion isn't about saying that using terms that indicate a gender, such as “mother” or “father,” are bad or offensive in some way. It's just that in today's society, they aren't always as relevant a reflection of the realities of Ontario's families and that more appropriate terminology ought to be used. Mr. Speaker, I need to make this clear: This isn't about banning the words “mother” and

“father,” as was mentioned by some members of the press gallery earlier this afternoon. This is about making Ontario more inclusive.

The government of Ontario currently uses more than 10,000 forms. The Ministry of Government and Consumer Services is the current caretaker of all government forms. We realize that for the government to undergo a full inventory of all forms, to take stock of forms which use gendered language and to see which would need updating, would place a significant burden on that specific ministry. Therefore, in the motion I have placed before the Legislature, I have asked for the government to do this on a go-forward basis, as forms get updated, amended, created or replaced, so as to avoid placing an undue burden on ministry resources.

As well, I think it is important to recognize that the common wisdom on what the best practices are in terms of inclusivity in language is changing rapidly. So in the motion that I have put before the House today, I have left what it means to use inclusive language to be open-ended, so that in the future, the government can use language that reflects the best practices that exist when a given form gets created or changed.

So while this motion may be beneficial to many people in varying family situations, such as single-parent families and divorced parents, I want to use my remaining time to speak to what this means in particular for families with LGBTQ parents. Ontario has made great strides towards achieving legal equality in society between all people. Canada's first gay rights march took place in Ontario, in Ottawa, in 1971. It was a Ontario Human Rights Commission decision in 1993, *Waterman v. National Life*, that was first to recognize that employers could not discriminate based on sexual orientation. It was Ontario that was the first province to allow same-sex couples to adopt in 1995. On May 10, 2002, it was an Ontario judge who ordered that Marc Hall could bring a same-sex date to his prom. On July 12, 2002, it was the Ontario Superior Court that ruled that banning same-sex marriage violated the equality provisions of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It was on July 19, 2012, that Toby's Act received royal assent, banning discrimination based on gender identity and expression. But there is still far more progress to be made in terms of achieving real social equality for LGBTQ people in Ontario.

In recent years, there have been positive steps made. As of 2005, two same-sex parents can be listed on a child's birth certificate. As of 2012, with the passage of the Accepting Schools Act, school boards couldn't prevent the creation of gay-straight alliances. As of earlier this year, with the passage of Bill 77, gay and trans conversion therapy for minors has been banned, and I want to applaud the work of the member from Parkdale-High Park on that. I was very happy to vote in favour of that bill and so was this government.

In speaking with my constituents at Fierté Sudbury Pride parades in past years—it was unfortunate that I couldn't attend this year with the passing of my father—

and then from meetings with organizations like TG Innerselves in my great riding of Sudbury, there is far more progress that we need to make.

I realize that changing the language on government forms may seem like a small step, but it's a small step in the right direction. It means this government is doing more than just saying it's legal to be LGBTQ, or legal to be a single parent, or that people ought not to treat someone differently because their identity is different or their situation may be different. It means that the government is actively recognizing that no matter the makeup of your identity or your family, you and your family are just as much a part of the rich mosaic that is Ontario.

Speaker, I am very proud to have put forward this motion as I feel this represents another step forward towards the one Ontario where everyone is treated with respect, regardless of their identity, that I want to see for this province, for my constituents in Sudbury, for the people of Ontario and, most importantly, for my daughters so all our families can grow in an Ontario that respects all.

As I know, I need to start to conclude as my time is running out. I first want to acknowledge Susan Gapka, who is here in the gallery.

Applause.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Yes, a well-deserved round of applause.

Susan and I have worked together for, I would say, five or six years in both of my elected capacities: on the hill in Ottawa and here at Queen's Park. Truly, if there is an advocate for making sure that politicians learn and grow, Susan has been able to help us do that. I'm very honoured today that Susan was able to make it here to hear my speech because I was able to learn a lot from Susan. If she continues to do the great work that she's doing with all of us here and with all the great work that she's doing across the country, I think we'll see more and more of these motions directing governments to do what's right.

With that, I also want to acknowledge that it's been 22 years now since I lost my oldest brother to AIDS. I know right now that he's looking down on me, smiling, because I've learned some very good lessons from him that I've been able to take forward to ensure that we're creating an Ontario that he would be proud of, that we can all be proud of, and that we continue to strive to make sure that everyone is included, everyone is respected and everyone is a part of this great province that we all live in.

With that, I look forward to the ongoing debate that we will have here on my motion today. I do hope that everyone will look at supporting this because I do think this will bring us forward in the right way.

Thank you very much for the time. I was honoured to speak today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I rise today to speak on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus to the private member's motion of the member for Sudbury, which reads as follows: "That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should replace gendered terminology with gender-neutral and inclusive language on all government forms as they are updated, amended, created, or replaced, in order to reflect the diverse nature of our province, including, but not limited to replacing the terms 'mother' or 'father' with terms such as 'parent' or 'guardian' to better recognize the rights of LGBTQ parents, and others."

1440

I'll spare the members opposite the suspense and say, right now, right from the get-go, that we, the PC caucus, will be supporting this motion.

Mr. Speaker, when you are first elected as a member of the Legislature, as I was in 2007, your first private member's ballot date is a very special one. During the course of your election campaign, there is usually a local issue that constituents are really concerned with. There's usually an issue they want you to take to Queen's Park and get fixed, if you are elected to represent them.

During my first election campaign in 2007, the issue in my riding was the planned expansion of the Bluewater Health campus in Sarnia. The Liberal government of the day had mismanaged the plans to renovate that hospital to such an extent that there were real concerns in the community that the hospital would never be completed. During the course of that campaign, I defeated a sitting Liberal cabinet minister, mostly in part because I committed to my constituents that I would see the expansion of Bluewater Health completed. That was a defining issue in our community during that election.

During the by-election in Sudbury last year, I know that the member elected faced many challenges, and he joins us here today.

While the motion is not without merit, I don't recall the use of gender-neutral language on government forms as being one of the number one concerns for the residents of Sudbury. Nevertheless, I'm happy to speak to this motion.

Straight off, though, I would have to say that the wording of the member's motion, in my opinion, is quite contradictory. The member talks about using inclusive language, and we in the Ontario PC caucus fully support that. Our new leader, Patrick Brown, has repeatedly committed to a more inclusive Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, where there is no monopoly on a good idea. But while calling for more inclusive language, the member is calling for the words "mother" and "father" to be excluded from government forms. If the member was really serious about being inclusive, he would be asking that words such as "parent" and "guardian" be added—I might add a stress on "added"—to government forms, not that the words "mother" and "father" be excluded from them.

I know everyone here would agree that the words "mother" and "father" mean many things to many people and shouldn't be excluded from government forms or our

day-to-day vocabulary. I'm sure that every member here has dealt with constituents who are the primary caregivers for their grandchildren, nieces, nephews or the biological children of other individuals. I'm also sure that those same members have been told by those constituents that these children often refer to them as "mom" or "dad," even though they may not be any biological connection.

Mr. Speaker, I ask, why is the member asking that we exclude those terms from our daily lexicon? Just this week, I noted that during the Premier's speech at the opening ceremonies of the International Plowing Match at Finch, Ontario, the Premier corrected another speaker on the platform who talked about our forefathers. The Premier said we must remember our foremothers as well.

The reality is that the spirit of the honourable member's motion already exists in the Ontario public service. The third and most current edition of the Ontario Public Service Correspondence Style Guide, published in 2006, almost 10 years ago, instructs government employees to avoid biased language. The guide states that gender-neutral terms should be used in all government correspondence.

So while I support the member's motion in principle, I would hope that he would embrace the true spirit of inclusiveness in this House. He should amend his motion to allow for the terms "parent" and "guardian" to be added to the terms "mother" and "father," and not instead of the words "mother" and "father."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Of course, we in the NDP are going to support this motion. As the member from Sudbury was speaking, I was feeling very, very old because I was the only woman in Canada to sign on to We Demand in 1971. I was part of that demonstration on Parliament Hill.

It has been my privilege, really, since then, to be the original mover of Toby's Act, in which I of course acknowledge Susan Gapka's presence. I also have to acknowledge that it took five different tablings five different times before we finally got that passed through the House.

I want to address this motion on three major levels, but first to say that Toby's Act has phenomenal ramifications. When you add gendered identity and gender expression to a human rights code, they're not just pretty words; they actually have legal ramifications. It was my honour to sit at an evening with lawyers from across Toronto, with the law society, all of whom were practising law based on Toby's Act—things like changing dress codes, the way washrooms are labelled, transition policies and health codes for large companies, and, of course, lawsuits. But one of the ways in which Toby's Act has ramifications is exactly on this, on identification. In fact, I would argue that we don't even really need this motion, because Toby's Act means that this government must—not maybe; not if this motion passes—but must

address this issue of identification, and must make identification gender neutral. So that's the point first.

Second of all, I want to address the issue of this motion going maybe not as far as it should. The member—and I know with great intention—mentions updated, amended or replaced identification. I would warrant that we can't wait. Particularly for the trans community, that needs to be immediate. For a trans community, this can be the difference between life and death. Trans folk, as you know, as the member from Sudbury would know, are the victims of violence more than just about any other minority. Trans folk live in poverty more than any other minority—about a 50% poverty rate. Trans folk attempt suicide more than any other minority. By the way, it's trans or transgender, not transgendered. So just say it.

This beleaguered community needs this assistance right away, not sometime in the future. I'll point out a couple of instances where that's important, but I'll leave the SAMS issue to another member who wants to speak on this bill. That's a question where there is already gendered use in those—and that was a huge computer program that this government invested millions in. But also jury duty, for example.

More to the point, why—again, Toby's Act, I think, should preclude this by law, if it was challenged—does it take a physician's note for a trans person to get a birth certificate or to get a piece of ID? I don't need a physician's note to say I'm a woman. People who have a same-sex preference don't need a note. I don't need a note to say I'm a bisexual woman. So why should a trans person need a note from a doctor to say that they're a woman or they're a man? This is absurd, and this is going on. I would argue that this is already in contradiction of Toby's Act and should immediately be addressed, not sometime in the future, and that's critical. Again, these are issues that are pertinent now.

The other concern I have, of course, is the very nature of this. This is a motion; it's not a bill. Motions are, by their very nature, non-binding, even if we pass them. And it is a private member's motion as well. Again, I know that the member from Sudbury has the best of intentions on this. I support his intentions. But what I would like to see, and I think what we would like to see in the New Democratic Party, is that this be a government initiative immediately—that we not wait for a motion; that we not wait for a committee. We feel that this is what the government should be doing under Toby's Act already. I don't know how often I have to say that. But in a sense, the motion pushes it off into some future time, and that future is now in Ontario.

I want to commend everyone here for voting for Toby's Act, because I think the ramifications of that are such that we really have set this province in the right direction. We are one of the largest jurisdictions, if not the largest jurisdiction, in the world with this kind of protective language—not just gender identity but gender expression. By the way, while I'm on it, let's talk about Bill C-279 federally—which, by the way, some members

who will go without being named, like the leader of the Liberal Party, were absent when the vote happened. I think that has to be noted because it's important that the presence be there. That bill, C-279, that was put forward when this member from Sudbury sat in that federal government—when that bill was put forward, it was literally rewritten by the Senate, and stalled. That's unfortunate. That's another reason, Mr. Speaker, why we should abolish the Senate. But another topic—another debate for another day.

1450

I want to acknowledge Susan Gapka being here, and her phenomenal advocacy, and not only Susan's advocacy, and she would be with me on this, but the Trans Health Lobby and TG InnerSelves, one of the best trans lobby groups in the province, from Sudbury, who were absolutely, unequivocally active around Bill 77 to ban conversion therapy. In fact, my meeting with them in Sudbury really coalesced my views around the fact that that bill needed to come forward.

Again, I commend the member for his motion today. I want to say that it shouldn't be necessary because the government should be doing this already. So I'll say that again: The government should be doing this already because it's covered by Toby's Act, and, if you don't do it right away, guess what? I suspect there will be challenges under Toby's Act with the Ontario Human Rights Code and with the commission, if you don't. So I'm putting that out there. Let's get busy.

I also want to give a shout-out for a parent equality bill which is coming up next week. I'm going to be introducing it. Even if you change the language on birth certificates, it's still a requirement on a birth certificate in Ontario to have a male and female on there. Imagine what that means to two women who are married, one who gives birth and the other who's a parent. They couldn't put those names on the birth certificate, even if this motion passed. So we need parent equality. That's a separate matter. That will come next week.

We need to pass this, yes, but more importantly, the government needs to act now, particularly for trans folk in the province of Ontario. Let's get busy, let's get going, because otherwise you're going to be facing some challenges.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I just want to start off by acknowledging the member from Sudbury for bringing forward this important motion, and I want to acknowledge the member from Parkdale—High Park for her passion and her support of the intention of the bill. She's always passionate in debates and always brings some very important points forward, whether we are looking at a bill, a motion or whatever in this House, so I acknowledge her and thank her for that.

What we have before us, of course, is this PMB to replace "gender terminology with gender-neutral and inclusive language on all government forms as they are updated, amended, created or replaced, in order to reflect

the diverse nature of our province, including, but not limited to the terms ‘mother’ or ‘father’ with terms such as ‘parent/guardian’ to better recognize the rights of LGBTQ parents, and others.” As the minister responsible for women’s issues, Speaker, and Minister of Children and Youth Services, I think this will be very welcomed by our stakeholders in both the women’s sector as well as in the children and youth sector. My ministries aren’t huge, huge ministries, but the indirect association of our transfer payment agencies and so forth, our stakeholders, who do great work in advancing equality for women, and men, is very significant. I think this would be most welcomed by them.

I understand, Speaker, that it will be the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services that would actually carry this forward, because they are the custodians of government forms. I like the idea that this motion speaks to forms being “updated, amended, created or replaced” as things go forward. That, I think, is an efficient and effective way to do things, just like we do with OHIP cards and so forth. I think this can be implemented over time and in a manageable way, but the intention of it can be clearly and strongly communicated up front, because, at the end of the day, we are a diverse province. There’s a range of languages, religions, beliefs, identities and sexual orientations. There’s just great diversity in our province, and our Premier, Kathleen Wynne, has worked very hard to ensure that these diverse voices are heard here at Queen’s Park, and beyond this Legislature too.

In terms of LGBTQ Ontarians, it is important to know that despite advancements, these groups continue to face discrimination and difficulties that are unique to the LGBTQ community. We should work to ensure that government forms, which of course are a requirement for accessing many government services, are truly accessible for all Ontarians and not limited just to one group.

At the end of the day, when we talk about the accessibility of government, I’ve always had the view that government needs to be accessible for everybody, not just one group, and that it’s the right thing to do. Government programs are taxpayer-funded programs, for the most part, and they need to be accessible for all.

I think this is a very progressive motion that we have in front of us. As Ontario continues to develop and grow, it’s important that we nurture our commitment to diversity and that we pursue policy and process changes like this that really align our commitments from the values point of view with how we operate the business of government.

I think this makes sense—I’m sensing support for this motion—and again, I want to thank the member from Sudbury for bringing this very important motion forward and for sharing some of his personal stories as well. I know it’s very hard to do that here in the Ontario Legislature, but I thank her for sharing her stories, and I’m very pleased to support this motion going forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I’m pleased to be able to stand and to add my voice and thoughts to this debate

today. I’m here representing friends and families from across my community, and we’re talking about inclusivity and acceptance. We’re here discussing a motion to do away with gendered language on forms. It’s a fairly broad motion that covers a number of forms, which is great, because we have a broad spectrum of needs and considerations when it comes to our community.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, I come to this Legislature by way of the classroom. I taught elementary students, one of my favourite ages being intermediate years. Regardless of age, I’ll tell you what makes the biggest difference, in my opinion, and that is family support. Students—all children—need love and support, and I’ll tell you that families come in all shapes and sizes. Family might mean a mom and a dad; it might mean a grandma; it might mean only one parent or two moms or two dads; it might be step-parents, aunts, uncles or a sibling old enough to be responsible; it can be a legal guardian. Children deserve to be cared for and to feel safe and supported in their homes, and I wish a home full of love and support for every child. It isn’t the gender of the care; it’s the nature of it.

Across our communities, we have friends and neighbours who meet with challenges every day in our society. When we see a barrier to inclusion, we need to address it. Everyone has the right to live authentically and participate in their community.

My colleague the member from Parkdale–High Park championed the voices and rights of our trans community and brought forward Bill 77, the Affirming Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Act, 2015, which received all-party support and royal assent just recently. Her bill bans conversion therapy in the province, which includes protections against conversion therapies being used on trans and non-gendered individuals. We are immensely thankful for her advocacy and work.

Mr. Speaker, you might have heard about the millions spent implementing the new social services software system or SAMS, the Social Assistance Management System. Profiles are established for clients within our social services community, and data is entered, files are kept and hopefully a person’s journey through the system goes smoothly—hopefully. However, at the beginning of the profile a client must identify as either male or female. This is a mandatory prompt when setting up the profile. The gender must also match their ID.

1500

Mr. Speaker, the old system had a tick box for gender as well, but now it reads male or female on every single page of SAMS.

This kills me: Every page that is attached to a client now, with the new and improved system, has a pink or blue avatar. Now, it isn’t just male or female. It’s blue for boy or pink for girl. I’m just going to let that sink in for a moment. Our new and improved, super-expensive, top-of-the-line, advanced and awesome SAMS system forces someone to be a pink lady or a blue man.

Also, if someone is transitioning, their worker has to make notes about it until that avatar switches colours and makes it official.

Also, regardless of whether a client identifies as male or female, the worker has to input gender based on what is printed, again, on their ID.

Also, if a client is transitioning, caseworkers can't identify them with their new name until they change over their information at the bank, which would require ID.

Again, barriers: new and improved, updated and expensive SAMS barriers. How many more systems have barriers like this?

Mr. Speaker, this needs to happen today. We should be giving choice and options, and I don't mean pink or blue; I mean the option to be authentic.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It is a pleasure to join this debate today. Let me give my personal thanks to the member from Sudbury for bringing this issue to the floor this afternoon.

Private members' time is always a time I really, really enjoy because sometimes it's a time when a member of the government can push his or her own government a little bit. I think that's what's happening here today. I've heard members, certainly from two parties, suggest that this is something we should be doing, and perhaps it should even have been done by now.

I think there's a saying, "Don't let perfection get in the way of progress." We've got to give the member credit. He is the one who brought it to the floor today. He's the one who is stimulating the debate. He's the one who is asking for the support of the House so that he can take it forward to the government or it can move through the process and we can perhaps prompt some action in this regard.

I was thinking of my own life. I was thinking that's how we sort of view the changes in society. I was born in a different country, Speaker. I moved here as an 11-year-old and had to adapt to the Canadian way of doing things. Things that were acceptable and routine in Britain weren't acceptable and routine in Canada. There was a different way of doing things.

Think of all the changes we've lived through. Our generation has probably lived through more changes than any other generation in the history of civilization, I'd suggest. There are technological changes, cultural changes and changes just in the way we view things as a human species. Sometimes I think the legislation or the rules or the rule books we choose to live by don't keep pace with the changes that have already taken place in society. Often they sort of lag behind. I think what the member has done here by introducing this bill is that he's exposed that a little bit.

He said there have been acceptable changes that have taken place in our society, but the rules that people live by, the forms they fill out, the way that they apply for things to just help them in their daily lives—those forms haven't kept pace with those changes. Sometimes it reinforces to someone that perhaps they aren't as accepted as they thought they were, or perhaps it reinforces that a government, a department or a service is not as interested

in them as it should be. I don't think that is the case. But if you read the form you might be drawn to that conclusion, that somehow you're different and you don't get the same treatment as somebody else. That is what I believe the member is trying to rectify today.

I think the bill we have before us from the member from Sudbury is worthy of the support of every member of this House. It certainly speaks to the values of the people of Ontario and the tolerance we have for each other. The multicultural nature of this province really is all about us all bringing the best to bear. I think the member from Sudbury has brought his best today and I think it's incumbent on all members of the House to support that effort.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Premièrement, je veux féliciter mon collègue le député de Sudbury pour son initiative de présenter cette motion aujourd'hui devant cette Chambre.

It is with great pleasure that I rise to speak on my colleague's motion seeking gender neutrality and inclusivity on Ontario's government forms. As a former social worker who had to sometimes deal with those parts and aspects, I'm very proud that the member from Sudbury is raising the issue, and I can hear a lot of positive comments about this great initiative.

L'Ontario est une province inclusive. Il est important de revoir la terminologie du genre et sa neutralité dans les formulaires gouvernementaux afin de répondre aux individualités de chacun.

Ontarians should always feel welcome and included in our society. It is important that as a society evolves and continues to embrace people's individuality, we update our government's forms to reflect who they want to be regarded as. For instance, there are many people who choose to adopt, and instead of registering the child to a mother and father, the parents of that child should be able to be regarded, under our government's records, as either parents, guardians or whichever neutral and inclusive term they ultimately choose. People should not be constrained to gender-normative adjectives; and unfortunately, members of the LGBTQ community are undermined by our gendered forms.

Plusieurs individus se sont battus pendant plusieurs années—de longues années—pour voir leurs droits individuels respectés.

Members should understand this legislation has a far-reaching and important impact for many segments of our society. I know families that are headed by a single parent, and for that parent and child, it can be extremely stigmatizing to identify as someone from either a single-mother or -father household. For these and all individuals, especially the children, we must update our government forms.

Government identification should mirror people's individual identification, and no one should feel ashamed of themselves and/or their family because of an ID we currently have them accept on government forms. I also

want to highlight that the member's motion does not request the government to overhaul government forms immediately. The motion requests that as part of the regular cycle of updating government documents, the changing of gender terms be part of that process for all forms.

I believe that the member from Sudbury's motion is part of this greater battle for social justice in Ontario.

Ce que le membre nous demande, c'est d'amener cette inclusivité, qui va vraiment faire partie du prochain siècle qui s'en vient—on est en 2015; il est temps que, comme gouvernement, on accepte l'égalité et l'inclusivité de toutes les personnes ici en Ontario, et je dirais même à travers le Canada.

Therefore, I urge every member in this House to support this motion. Ontario should continue to be a leader. We can show Ontarians that everyone is accepted by updating our forms in order to reflect the progressive nature of our society.

Je demande à chacun et chacune des membres ici d'appuyer la motion de mon collègue de Sudbury.

I urge every member to vote in favour of this wonderful motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

There being no further debate, I now turn to the member from Sudbury. Two minutes for your response.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Before I begin, I know we have many new guests that have arrived here in the House, so welcome, but I'd like to single out Mr. Rick Bertrand, the president of Local 6500 from my great riding of Sudbury. Welcome to Queen's Park.

I'd also like to thank the members for Sarnia-Lambton, Parkdale-High Park, the Minister of Children and Youth Services and the minister responsible for women's issues, the member for Oshawa, the Minister of Labour and the member for Ottawa-Orléans for their contribution to this discussion this afternoon.

While I'll try to address some of the issues that each member has brought forward, I'd first like to address the member from Sarnia-Lambton, who I understand will be supporting this but had some concerns and wanted to continue to keep certain language on the form. I guess he really didn't understand the gist of what we're trying to do, which is to make sure that it's inclusive. You could add every single terminology, but the form wouldn't fit. That just doesn't make any sense. The way we're moving forward on this is actually inclusive for everyone.

1510

I do want to acknowledge all of that hard work that the member from Parkdale-High Park has done on these issues—since 1971, I believe you mentioned. You did talk a lot about Toby's Law and the pace that we're going in terms of this.

I think the Minister of Labour, in his address, talked about one of the reasons why I thought it was important to bring this forward, to continue to try and push. With 10,000 forms, minimum, that have to be managed by the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services, it is

really important that we continue to make sure that, as we move forward, we continue to see progress being made on this, because it truly is important to get done.

I also want to thank the Minister of Children and Youth Services and responsible for women's issues for her passionate support for this bill, and, of course, my colleague from Ottawa-Orléans. It's important to me to make sure that people come together and support this. And to my one constituent who started all of this: Julie, I thank you for bringing this forward and flagging it for me.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you very much. We'll take the vote on this motion at the end of private members' public business.

PROTECTING VICTIMS OF OCCUPATIONAL DISEASE ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA PROTECTION DES VICTIMES DE MALADIES PROFESSIONNELLES

Ms. French moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 98, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to loss of earnings and survivor benefits / Projet de loi 98, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail en ce qui concerne les prestations de survivant.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: It is always my privilege to rise in the Legislature and add my voice to the debate, but today is a very special and important opportunity. Today, I am here to present and debate my first private member's bill, Bill 98, the Protecting Victims of Occupational Disease Act, 2015.

It is appalling that hundreds of Ontarians fall victim to occupational disease every year, and it is even more appalling that we allow them and their families to be hung out to dry. We hope to bring an end to this today.

It is also my privilege to recognize guests and supporters who are here today in the Legislature. This bill came together as the result of the partnerships of people working together for years to make a necessary change for workers and their families.

Today, I am pleased to welcome Rick Bertrand, who I believe has travelled the farthest today. Mr. Bertrand is the president of United Steelworkers Local 6500 in Sudbury. He is here on behalf of the miners and their widows who were first involved in this issue. In addition to Mr. Bertrand, I would like to thank J.P. Mrochek, USW Local 6500's employee compensation representative, who has worked tirelessly to represent workers and widows in their community on issues pertaining to the WSIB and health and safety. J.P. and Local 6500 have

been a driving force behind this legislation. Thank you and welcome to Queen's Park. And welcome to Gerry Leblanc, who is here as the health and safety department leader at the USW national office.

I am also pleased to welcome and sincerely thank Sid Ryan, the president of the Ontario Federation of Labour, for joining us at Queen's Park today. I want to recognize the work and support from the OFL team over these past years on this issue. Thank you for your commitment and your continued support.

Thank you to president Carmen Santoro of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association for his support and involvement, and I welcome Andrew Lee, co-chair of the OPFFA occupational disease committee, to the Legislature.

Also in the members' gallery joining us today is Trish Fontyn, here from the Office of the Worker Adviser. Welcome, and thank you for your commitment to workers' rights.

I also see and want to recognize, from my riding of Oshawa, Joel Smith, joining us from Unifor Local 222.

Lastly, I want to recognize Ms. Oram and Ms. Rocca, who are watching this afternoon from Sudbury. I look forward to sharing their stories with you today.

The story of this bill started long before I came across the issue, Mr. Speaker. Last winter, I had the opportunity to meet with J.P. Mrochek, the employee compensation representative for USW Local 6500. J.P. was representing miners and their widows four years ago when a technicality—a legislative loophole, if you will—was first discovered and used by employers' lawyers to target the survivor benefits paid to widows of miners who had died of occupational diseases. Widows who had lost their husbands to long-drawn-out illnesses contracted while working in the mines were being targeted.

At that time in 2010, J.P. and Local 6500 started to appeal to the then Minister of Labour and connect with others who would help workers and their surviving spouses. I would like to recognize the work that started back then and thank my colleague, France Gélinas, the member from Nickel Belt, who has been championing this issue since the start of 2011.

Since early 2011, this government has had four Ministers of Labour who have all heard from USW 6500, the member from Nickel Belt and the Ontario Federation of Labour on this issue. Recently, as the target has shifted predominantly to the surviving spouses of firefighters, this government has also been hearing from the OPFFA as well—four Ministers of Labour, Mr. Speaker.

In fairness, this government has acknowledged that this is an area to be addressed, and today we have the opportunity to make that change. So here we are: I'm proposing the changes that are long overdue in Bill 98. It's time to pass this bill and make the changes we've been talking about for four years.

Since 2011, there have been at least 14 Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals Tribunal decisions that have resulted in the WSIB reducing pensions or periodic payments to the surviving spouses of workers who have

died of occupational diseases. The issue started with miners in Sudbury, but it applies to all workers in this province who are susceptible to occupational diseases. If the worker—say a steamfitter, a miner or a firefighter—was diagnosed after they had retired, then their widow's survivor benefits would be in question. The catch was that in retirement they were no longer earning wages; pensions, incidentally, are not considered earnings.

There's the basic loophole: Widow's pensions were being calculated one way, but the lawyers argued they should be calculated another. The lawyers won the argument. They argued the letter of law, but today we are here arguing the spirit of the legislation. Mr. Speaker, these victims have already lost their spouses to an occupational disease, and it is unconscionable that we have allowed even more to be taken from them. We have the opportunity to change that today.

Gisele Oram is at home in Sudbury today. Hi, Gisele. She was kind enough to share what the survivor's benefit means to her. Mrs. Oram lost her husband, Harold, to mesothelioma, an occupational disease he contracted while working in the mine.

She said, "For me it means life, more or less. Before I finally got the money, I was depressed. People were scared for me that I was going to die, I was so depressed. The government paid for some of the medication. But the government doesn't pay for glasses. Or dentures. It all comes out of pocket and then have you to pay rent after all that. When my husband died, the bill people kept calling me.

"I know that money comes in and I can pay my bills, and ... before that I would be broke after the first week. It means I can breathe.

"Another thing too: I've been sleeping in my La-Z-Boy for four years....

"When the money came in, the first thing I went out and bought was a bed. I was tired of living in a chair."

Mr. Speaker, I was also pleased to speak with Anne Rocca. Mrs. Rocca lost her husband to an occupational disease as a result of working in the mine. She worries that someone will come after her and her pension. She cannot imagine what she would do if that were to happen:

"If I didn't have it, I'd lose my house. That's the bottom line. I'm grateful for the benefits I get, and I don't know why they want to take them away. It means a roof over our head, for one thing. My husband and I sacrificed to get this house. If they take that away, then I don't know what's going to happen....

"I don't know what I'd do without the money coming in. I wish my husband was here instead. But that's not going to happen."

Mr. Speaker, people who have lost this much already need to be protected before they lose the support they're entitled to, and that's what this bill is about.

1520

I'm going to do my best to explain a fairly complicated part of our compensation system. I'm going to explain the old rules versus the new rules for compen-

sating workers who have been diagnosed with an occupational disease in their retirement.

Imagine two co-workers. One gets sick and is diagnosed with an occupational disease while working. WSIB compensates him fairly and pays a loss-of-earnings benefit. Loss of earnings: This is based on his loss of potential earnings.

Imagine his co-worker doesn't get sick. He instead retires. However, his disease has a longer latency and he didn't get diagnosed, didn't get sick until he had stopped working. Then what happens?

By the old rules which determined payments from 1998 to 2009, that worker would have also received the loss-of-earnings payment. Fair is fair: His workplace made him sick so he received compensation. However, after 2009, this practice of paying loss of earnings ended. By the new rules, fair isn't fair anymore.

Now, if a worker is diagnosed after they retire, they can no longer receive the loss-of-earnings benefit because lawyers of employers argue that if they are retired, they aren't earning and, therefore, they aren't losing earnings. This loophole saves the employers having to compensate for a dangerous, toxic and slowly fatal workplace because of a wording technicality. Employers will hope a worker retires before diagnosis so they aren't eligible for a loss-of-earnings payment. This, incidentally, incentivizes a slower process for care and diagnosis, and this is not in the spirit of the act.

My bill calls to continue the practice of fair compensation under the old rules. If the government or the lawyers want to argue that it isn't fair to calculate based on loss of earnings, then what is fair? Is it fair to compensate based on the loss of time with loved ones, loss of time with grandkids, loss of retirement, loss of health, loss of quality of life or just loss of life? I hope you won't argue the spirit of the act, and I hope the government sees the unfairness of calling the diagnosis date the date of injury when the dates of actual injury and injurious exposure resulting in the diagnosis happened on the job.

We can haggle here over definitions or, as I believe this ministry recognizes and understands, we can have the chance to make something right for real people. We have the chance to make it right for people who have died or will because their workplace made them sick; to make it right for people who have lost their loved ones and now face losing the bulk of the financial compensation that keeps them in their homes with bills paid and food on the table. Let's pass this bill today and move it to committee, where it can make this right. We can hammer it out in committee and make this story about what is fair and what is decent.

Mrs. Oram in Sudbury shared this with me. She said, "They had a ceremony for the people who died at the mine. For the first time they had a ceremony for the people who died of disease. I'm really glad I was there. A lot of people die of disease from working in the mines. I remember waking up with headaches. A lot of people got sick and died because of the mine even though they didn't work there. But they couldn't prove it. It was in the air. We didn't know any better."

Mr. Speaker, we know better now. We are adding recognized presumptive diseases and cancers as we are recognizing the risks and many toxins in workplaces. Our firefighters are constantly exposed to dangers and carcinogens. We have come a long way since the early days. Hopefully, we will see a decrease in the diagnoses of occupational diseases. Hopefully, we can have safer workplaces where fatalities and diseases can't happen. As we work towards that, however, we must protect the victims of occupational disease and defend their surviving families and spouses soon.

This is a bill that needs to be passed and an issue that cannot be ignored. There is important and technical work to be done in committee to ensure the best fix to this problem happens and happens soon.

I am eager to get this bill into the committee process and out the other side. I hope all members of this House will vote today to pass Bill 98 to protect the victims of occupational disease.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Han Dong: I'm pleased to debate on this very important bill presented by the honourable member from Oshawa, Bill 98, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, with respect to loss of earnings and survivor benefits.

I think it's extremely important, and this House would agree, that there's fairness for the survivors of those workers who died from occupational disease. We all know there are certain lines of work that are more dangerous than others and more vulnerable to occupational disease, such as firefighters. This member probably will agree that in essence the government has been working to address this issue.

On May 28, 2015, our government introduced Bill 109, also known as the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015. If passed, the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015, will make amendments to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, also known as the WSIA, that would allow Workplace Safety and Insurance Board—WSIB—survivor benefits to be calculated based on the average earnings, at the time of diagnosis, of the deceased worker's occupation rather than the current legislated minimum.

This will potentially increase the amount of support that families receive. This change is especially relevant for occupations, as I mentioned, such as firefighters and steelworkers, where occupational diseases prevail and in which the occupational disease is typically diagnosed when the worker is retired or no longer engaged in the occupation or trade out of which the disease arose.

Our proposed amendments would apply to payments for survivor benefits that are payable as of January 1, 1998. I think that is very important to note.

There is precedent for this type of calculation by WSIB for reasons of fairness and equity. Under the former Workers' Compensation Act, which was in effect until the end of 1997, the WSIB was able to use com-

parator earnings when calculating the quantum of benefits for occupational disease. Under the proposed amendments, the WSIB would be required to adjudicate pending claims in accordance with the proposed amendments, and the survivors would be able to request that the WSIB reconsider past decisions of the board and also the Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals Tribunal. The WSIAT would be required to refer pending appeals to the WSIB for adjudication, in accordance with the proposed amendments.

These proposed amendments are quite similar to those contained in this bill, Bill 98, as it relates to survivor benefits, so we can support it in principle. This being said, the bill also proposes loss-of-earnings benefits for retired workers that are not being contemplated at this time but may be worthy of discussion as the government's legislation moves forward through standing committee consideration.

I think it's good that the member opposite should propose this bill to this House and bring more debate to the importance of being fair to the survivors of occupational disease. I'm very pleased to debate this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm very pleased to have this opportunity this afternoon to speak to Bill 98, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, with respect to loss of earnings and survivor benefits.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, under this piece of legislation, "Section 43 of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, provides for payments for loss of earnings to a worker where the loss of earnings results from an injury, which includes occupational disease. The bill addresses the situation of a worker who is no longer working at the time of contracting an occupational disease by providing for loss of earnings to be determined in this case if the worker had still been working at the time of the diagnosis."

1530

That is the first paragraph in the explanatory note. I won't read the second one, but I know members will have access to the bill and can read that for themselves.

I want to acknowledge the member for Oshawa, who has brought forward this piece of legislation. She arrived in this Legislature in 2014. She's now been here for just over a year and a half, I guess, and she's made her presence known here and has been very actively participating in the debates in this Legislature. Of course, as a member for Oshawa, she's the successor to a number of fine members who came before her. I think of my friend and former colleague Jerry Ouellette, who was an outstanding member for Oshawa, and who served here from the 36th to the 40th Parliament. He was first elected, I believe, in 1995, if my memory is correct. I also served with his predecessor, Allan Pilkey, who was the NDP member from 1990 to 1995. Before that, Michael Braugh was here for a long time—from 1975 to 1990, I believe. He sat with the NDP caucus and was one of the leading lights in the NDP caucus in those days.

Obviously the member from Oshawa has big shoes to fill, but she is endeavoring to do that and has become a very capable and effective member.

Certainly, for our part as the official opposition caucus, the PC caucus, we want to see fairness and compassion for injured workers as well. Certainly I think that's how this bill has come forward; that's the primary motivation.

I think it's important to put on the record some comments about the WSIB in a general sense. The WSIB, of course, as we know, is an independent trust agency that administers compensation and no-fault insurance for Ontario's workplaces. It's one of North America's largest insurance organizations, providing workplace injury insurance for more than five million workers and 290,000 employers across the province. It's a very, very important part of the provincial government's responsibilities. Of course, it's been set up as an arm's-length agency.

The WSIB was first established as the worker's compensation board—I think it was actually the Workmen's Compensation Board in those days, in 1914, before we had the gender-neutral terminology that we have today—through the passage of the Workmen's Compensation Act. In 1998, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act formed the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. I remember the passage of that legislation back in this House prior to the turn of the century.

We know that in the current situation, the Auditor General reported in 2009 that the WSIB's costs had far exceeded its revenues. In fact, by 2012, the WSIB was facing an unfunded liability of \$14.1 billion and, of course, the employers of the province are on the hook for that over the long term.

The board has been working to turn this situation around and the WSIB is now on a much stronger and stable financial footing. The unfunded liability has been dropped down to \$8.9 billion, a reduction of about \$2.4 billion. I certainly want to extend credit for that to the staff and the board of directors, as well as the chair of the WSIB, our former colleague Elizabeth Witmer. The management team has done an outstanding job to get the organization back into a stronger financial position.

I'm sure the member with the bill is anxious to hear what our caucus is going to be saying about this bill. We want to listen to the debate. I had some fundamental questions about the bill when I was doing the research in advance of my presentation this afternoon. I asked myself the question, what exactly is the bill attempting to achieve and what is the fundamental problem that the bill is intending to address? I think the member for Oshawa, in her presentation this afternoon, was trying to answer those questions. I look forward to reviewing the Hansard when I get the chance as well to get a better understanding.

I think we have to be concerned about the continued unfunded liability of the WSIB, because, again, the employers are on the hook for that. I think it's important for us to have a sound understanding of what this bill would cost if in fact it were adopted. I would suggest that

there needs to be an honest and comprehensive financial analysis of what this bill would cost if it were passed into law, so that we understand that. That's obviously very important. We can't just be expanding the benefits through the WSIB without knowing what it's going to cost employers.

The WSIB has done a good job in terms of maintaining—actually, restricting the increase in—premium costs in recent years. In fact, for three years in a row, they've been able to keep premium rates at the level that they've been, and there haven't been increases. That's something that's very commendable, but we have to be paying attention to those things.

I wanted to put on the record some comments that I received from someone who has studied this bill and is an expert, but I haven't got his permission to use his name so I'm going to keep it in confidence for now. He does say this:

"Bill 98 is a significant change. For many years the WSIB paid benefits to the worker once a determination of a work-related injury had been made. If the worker had left the workplace—retired, for example—the WSIB would apply the act and policy to continue benefits to age 65, and if the worker was 63 or older at the time of the determination, then two years of benefits. The Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals Tribunal disagreed. It took the position that if a worker left the workplace—retired—and was not therefore earning any income from an employer, then the worker would not be eligible for loss-of-earnings benefit entitlement, even if, post-retirement, the worker was diagnosed with an occupational disease."

This speaks to the fundamental mandate of the WSIB, which is to provide benefits for economic loss if a person is hurt or has an occupational disease—in other words, a disease that relates back to their employment—that they would be compensated for loss of earnings. There's the other component, which is non-economic loss, and I think that has to be looked at in that context.

I think that we need to look at this bill carefully, and certainly my colleague for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound wants to speak to it as well. We're continuing to listen to the debate, and I look forward to hearing from other members as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cindy Forster: As the labour critic it's my honour to speak on Bill 98, brought forward by my colleague from Oshawa. I want to welcome our labour leaders and friends here today as well.

This bill is pretty simple: It's going to fix something that has been broken for about six years. All it seeks to do is to eliminate a technicality in the act that allows the benefits of workers' surviving spouses to be drastically reduced. If someone passes away after they have left the workforce, in fact their spouses will continue to receive the same pension that they did receive before their loved one passed away.

This loophole could have been fixed—and should have been fixed—by the Liberal government six years ago when it was brought to their attention that there was a problem with the legislation, but I'm happy that the member from Oshawa has now introduced it.

This government and the Minister of Labour have been promising action on supporting injured workers and their families, but they've been empty promises to date. If you talk to any chapter of the Ontario Network of Injured Workers, if you go out to any of their meetings across the province, if you get on a telephone call with injured workers in your constituencies, many of them, after having been injured in workplaces across this province, are existing on Ontario Works or ODSP while they fight their way through the myriad processes under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.

While the member talked about Elizabeth Witmer and the huge improvements that she has made to the financial position of WSIB, it hasn't made it any easier, I can tell you, for the workers in this province who are trying to either get benefits or get their benefits reinstated.

There have been many stories about spouses and their loved ones, about their benefits being cut in the mining industry, and with firefighters. Frankly, the government ignored this for years and years. Last year the member from Oshawa actually went to Sudbury and met with some of those families. These are vulnerable people. Their spouses were either injured or have passed away. They may have children and grandchildren to support. The government has done nothing to assist them. It was only after the member from Oshawa put forward this bill that the government added a portion of her bill to a separate piece of legislation, but this very important part about "How am I going to support my family?" was never addressed.

Why is this government simply reacting to the deaths and injuries of workers by not being proactive? Every worker should be able to expect that when they leave work at the end of their shift, or leave work at the end of their working career, they are going to actually arrive home uninjured and alive. They should expect that if they are no longer here, there are going to be benefits in place to support their family. We, as legislators, have a responsibility to those families, to the spouses and the kids.

1540

So I encourage that every member in this House would have a hard look at this bill and would unanimously support the member from Oshawa with this bill that will bring a lot of peace and a lot less stress to the families of their loved ones.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It is a pleasure, once again, to rise in this House and speak to the bill that's being put forward by the member from Oshawa. Let me right from the start tell the member that I'll be supporting the bill, and certainly I've urged my colleagues to support the bill. When people have asked me for advice on this issue, I've said that this is an issue that is worthy of their support.

The reason for that is that members of all three parties in this House know that the treatment of those people who have been either injured or killed on the job is something that we as a society treat very importantly. It's the type of issue that I think crosses those partisan lines. It's wonderful to see an initiative come forward from the New Democratic Party that is very similar to an initiative that's being put forward as a piece of legislation from the government itself. It proves to me, tells me that we're not as different as we make out to be in this House, that often we have a lot more in common than the newspapers or the media would have you believe from time to time.

I also thank the people in the gallery who have come today, three people I've learned to respect over the years. First, Andrew Lee is somebody I've known for a very long time. His work with the firefighters' association—in particular, Andrew has long been a champion of those members of the firefighters' association who have become sick on the job, have been injured on the job or in fact have actually died as a result of exposures on the job.

Sid Ryan is here, president of the OFL. Sid, it's great to see you here. I know you've been in my office on a number of occasions and have never failed to champion the cause of injured workers. It's always been a pleasure to have you in my office. It's great to see you here.

Rick Bertrand is somebody I've gotten to know since I became the Minister of Labour and is definitely a strong champion for the Steelworkers up in Sudbury. When I go up there I always feel that we're able to have frank and forthright exchanges about how we can make things better for injured workers.

I think the type of people who have been attracted to this debate speaks volumes, so plaudits to the member from Oshawa for being able to stimulate this type of a debate.

If you look at Bill 98 and you look at Bill 109, you'll find that there are an awful lot of similarities. I'm urging all members of this House, as I said, to support this bill, because I think that as Bill 109 moves through the committee process, and amendments and different ideas come forward, opinions come from all three parties during the standing committee process, there may be, in fact, some room where amendments could be brought forward which would actually meet the intent of what the member from Oshawa is proposing in Bill 98.

She certainly has done her homework. She's listened to her constituents, those people who represent the working people in this province who rely on WSIB. At times when they're injured, when they're sick or when something more serious happens on the job, injured workers in this province turn to the WSIB. I know it's an organization that, from time to time, becomes a bit of a lightning rod. But the intent of the organization, why it was formed, what it was put in place for—I think, by and large, the organization tries to stay true to those ideals that led to its formation in, I think, 1919.

I don't think I'm going to speak to the specifics of the bill because they've been spoken to very well by other

people. I would say that the similarities between the legislation that is going to the committee and this bill warrant the support of all members of this House to allow the issue to remain on the floor as a very visible issue, so that people understand that there have been concerns expressed by at least one party in this House, that they want this issue kept alive. I think it serves notice that during the committee process there will be at least one party, and perhaps two and perhaps three, that will be urging improvements to the government bill as it goes through so that perhaps the two are more line in line.

We are trying to do some good things at the WSIB these days. I know that some people who have struggled with the WSIB in years past may have a hard time believing that. I think there's an element of goodwill with the WSIB that really speaks to the progress that they've been able to make over the years.

One of the previous speakers mentioned some of the organizations that represent injured workers. I've gone out of my way as the Minister of Labour to attend a lot of the functions that perhaps a Minister of Labour wouldn't typically go to: some of the dinners they have at the Steelworkers hall in Toronto here, some of the events they have. As much as a Minister of Labour can, I think I've been able to establish a place where we could have a dialogue on these important issues, some of which have been outstanding, some of which will take some great effort to address and some of which can be solved fairly easily, though. I'm thinking of some of the impacts that injured workers—and the input they've already had along the way. They've talked about such things as a 72-month lock-in. They gave me excellent advice on that when, at one point, I perhaps was going in a different direction on that issue. As a result, specifically, of what injured workers in the groups told me, I certainly am looking at that issue in a much different way.

The OFL—as I said, Sid Ryan is here today—is an organization that has provided some excellent input as well over the years, and certainly in the last year and a half since I've been the minister has made me rethink and change my course on a number of issues that affect my role with the WSIB.

We all know that it's an arm's-length agency. We all know that it is governed by an independent board. But certainly the link between government and the WSIB is something that people understand. We do have influence. This House, the Legislature, really has influence in the way that the WSIB conducts its business on behalf of the businesses and injured workers in this province.

Let me close with my thanks to the member from Oshawa for bringing this issue forward. My thanks to her for sitting down with me the other day and discussing what she was hoping to accomplish, and my thanks to her for listening to me, as Minister of Labour, explaining how I think that we can work together on this. I think we can get to the place that you would like to see us get to in the end.

I'm supporting the bill. I hope all members on this side of the House will support the bill, and I'm assuming everybody on that side of the House will as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: I just want to acknowledge my colleague from Wellington–Halton Hills speaking to any bill in this House. He's one of the most well regarded, thoughtful and pragmatic people that I know in this House and have come to respect. I think what he's tried to do, particularly with these types of bills, is look at it from both sides of the ledger, as I try to do as well.

I certainly want to acknowledge Ms. French, my colleague, for raising the awareness of this and trying to promote and ensure that it actually gets a solid look and gets addressed, because there are certainly some challenges.

I want to also use a bit of my time to just acknowledge that our new leader, Patrick Brown, on his first day's second question, actually showed support—and I want to acknowledge that there are professional firefighters and members of labour in the room—to ensure that something like post-traumatic stress disorder, PTSD, which, in some ways, is similar to this, is getting the attention and the priority that it certainly deserves. A colleague from my great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, Dan Urbshott, who's in EMS, brought a similar type of concern to my attention, and I said, “We'll certainly address this.” This is something that we need to be looking at and trying to approach.

I do, and it's a very well-intended—I think where I'm at is, as I try to do with all legislation, I look at all sides of the issue. What is the good, what is the bad and back to the reality of how do we fund this? That's one of the things, certainly in the discussions I've had with people—how do you pay for it? Most people are understanding that there's a need and there are certainly specific cases that no one could argue with, but there is a concern about what is the potential for fraud and abuse of this.

It's like many things that we all think of. Insurance was intended to be something that protected and helped people in their time of need, and there is a percentage of people out there who will try to find that loophole and drive a bus through it, and we just need to make sure that is—I think one of the things my colleague Mr. Arnott from Wellington–Halton Hills said is that it needs to be, certainly, a thoroughly costed proposal. What's the reality of this going to be?

1550

I ask this point very specifically and purposely, because in my short four years here, I have very significant concerns about things that the Liberal government particularly has done. The Green Energy Act: What was the benefit? What was the cost? Was it intended, and did it actually match anywhere close to that? Ornge: Again, no costing and all of a sudden there's a big bill that all taxpayers of Ontario are paying. eHealth was similar: not fully or accurately costed out, and we're still, again, paying for that through our taxation system.

Most recently, in the last session in my critic role, SAMS was one of those. They purported to be rolling it

out, and it was going to be this wonderful thing that improved everything; there was no negative to it whatsoever. Yet it was way over budget, and then they had to find another \$20 million just to fix the glaring issues when they did the rollout. So I have very big concerns.

We've talked in here very significantly in the last number of days, and certainly it will continue to bear a lot of potential priority concern, about the fire sale of Hydro One. What's the costing? What's the real benefit to the taxpayer? Who is going to pay the freight? Who is going to benefit?

In the case of this bill, it certainly is the case that there are going to be people who are in need. There are certainly people that this will address, and the retroactive piece is there for those who need it—I like a lot of those points that are in there. But I think we have to make sure we are going through and ensuring that we've thought about the unintended consequences, because that again is something I have certainly viewed many times here. Many people bring great ideas to this House. Most of us can say, in principle, “Yeah, I get it—the general, high level.”

But let's get into the details. Let's get into really who is going to benefit and who it's intended to benefit. Are they the ones who, at the end of the day, are truly going to get the benefit of this intent, or is it going to again get clouded in those who take it? We all know—I keep saying it; I certainly see it every day—that there are portions of people who go off and want to derive something else for their own personal benefit, who, in reality, have no right.

We also have to remember that there's currently an unfunded liability at the WSIB. New leadership and new management have come in, and they're certainly moving the meter, but there are a lot of people in my riding still trying to address the current WSIB. So I just want to make sure, when we're doing this type of thing, that we take a thoughtful process, balance it and ensure that we've costed it out, so that those victims—particularly those people you've referenced, Ms. French—who are truly in need are actually going to get it and we don't again send it off into something where there's money wasted on things that weren't intended and the victims are still sitting there saying, “What happened to me?”

I think we have to make sure that it's thorough. It has to be well thought out, it has to be detailed and it has to be costed. Again, I praise the member for bringing it. At least we're getting it on the radar so we're looking into it and addressing it, which is what we're sent here to do as legislators.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to personally congratulate the member from Oshawa for bringing this bill forward. I know she spent a lot of time working on the information and the research to bring this bill forward, but it is in a thoughtful way and actually has meaning to the victims who are affected by injuries at work.

I also want to thank her guests for coming out today to support the member from Oshawa and her bill. It's very

important that we have the support of the community and the support of community leaders when we present these bills, because those issues are important to our constituents and many Ontarians overall, especially injured workers—all of us have them throughout our ridings.

It is my honour to rise today to speak to Bill 98, the Protecting Victims of Occupational Disease Act. This bill addresses a major loophole in the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. This bill would provide for death benefits to be paid to survivors when a worker dies due to an injury, and amends sections to address situations where a deceased worker was no longer working at the time of the injury, including at the time of contracting the occupational disease. That's at the heart of this bill, and that's the issue that's being addressed.

To echo my colleague's comment from a recent remark in this House, she said that the loophole from the previous version of this bill adds insult to injury, and it truly does. I'm glad to see that it's going to be corrected today. It sounds like there's a lot of support for this bill.

It's a shocking thing to think that hundreds of families lose a loved one to occupational disease every year, and yet this loophole has allowed these families to become victims once again. Families and loved ones across this province deserve better. When the member for Oshawa put this bill forward in May, this government decided to incorporate a portion of her bill in a different piece of legislation. It wasn't everything she asked for but simply a small portion. This is after the members of the Ontario Federation of Labour who are here and United Steelworkers Local 6500 raised concerns and started asking the Premier to act on this. Then it took four Ministers of Labour to fly by this government, and it's only after my colleague here stood up and presented this bill that they took action and decided, as the labour minister has said, to support this bill, as I hope all the members do on that side of the House.

What I don't think this government understands is that so many workers across this province would benefit from passing this bill. While miners and firefighters are among the most frequent victims, the issue could affect surviving spouses of any of hundreds of workers who die every year from exposure to harmful chemicals at work. This government should be doing everything it can to protect injured workers and their families and ensure that hard-working people of this province get the respect they deserve.

As many members have done earlier today, I encourage everyone to support this bill, from all sides of the House, to get it to committee so that the real work and the definitions and all the concerns that have been brought up today can actually be worked on and we can pass this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I will try to be brief because there's only a few minutes left on the clock.

I start by thanking Rick Bertrand from USW 6500. He represents the operation at Vale, the biggest mine

operation in Sudbury. We also have Gerry Leblanc from the national office, Andrew Lee from the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association and Sid Ryan from the OFA. Thank you for being here. That tells you how important this is.

But it is also important to Madame Audette, Madame Gauthier, Mrs. Oram and Mrs. Rocca, because their livelihood depends on the decisions that we are going to make this afternoon.

Let's make no bones about it: The system was there. It is extremely difficult for a miner to prove that they got sick while they were at work. The amount of paperwork, the amount of work that needs to be done to convince the WSIB that this miner is sick because of what he did underground at the mine, requires years of work, of documents, of looking back into everything that has had an effect. Very few of them win those cases, Speaker; make no bones about it. We have a high cancer rate in Sudbury, we have a high cancer rate within the mining community in Sudbury, but very few of them get covered by the WSIB.

For the few of them who make it to the finish line, who finally were able to prove that they got sick because they were guilty of getting up every day and going to work, we finally got compensation. And then a lawyer—I can't speak his words because I want to spit, and I don't do that very often, Speaker, but I can't believe it—had an employer notice of appeal. Listen to this: They want the tribunal—the WSIB tribunal—to take into account the fact that the worker was retired from the workforce. “The loss of earnings should be recalculated [to be] \$0 and the spousal benefits should be recalculated on the basis of the net earnings,” which is \$0.

Not only did this person die because of what happened to him at work; he was served by a lawyer who has the guts to say, “We agree. You've done all of this fight and you died because of what happened at work, but you know what? You're retired. Therefore, we will give you \$0, and your widow will get the same thing: She will get \$0”—all this because a lawyer looked at one word in an act that is that thick, one word, and said, “earnings.”

Apparently, if you are a lawyer, you cannot understand that retirement is earnings and what you've earned—no. Apparently, earnings do not include pensions. Where the blank did that come from? I don't know, but I can't stand for things like this: a lawyer who will be paid 400 bucks an hour to argue that Madame Audette, Madame Gauthier, Madame Oram and Mrs. Rocca get nothing, that they have lost their husbands, that they will now live the rest of their lives alone. Some of these women are in their eighties and nineties. How can they ever support themselves? They're not going to go back to work. Who takes a 93-year-old back to work? That makes no sense. They depend on those earnings, and then this came. Since this lawyer put that forward, it has changed everything.

1600

Will it change the world? Absolutely not. We're talking about 25 widows at the most who will be helped

if we clarify what we meant when we passed this bill originally, that we meant that earnings were earnings. That's all that we're doing. It's not going to cost millions of dollars. It's not going to change the world, but for Madame Audette, Madame Gauthier, Mrs. Oram, Mrs. Rocca and 21 other widows, it's going to mean a life with dignity.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I want to thank everyone for their comments.

I now return to the member from Oshawa. You have two minutes for your response.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I appreciate all of the thoughtful comments and support around the room. I'm, of course, glad to speak to my private member's bill today, but I'm also going to take this opportunity to read a poem, written by David Lindeman, a miner who was from USW Local 6500 in Sudbury.

Don't Mourn My Death

Mourn for my life, it was unkind and unjust
I was killed by my workplace, after years of my trust.
I stood and watched as the poisons rolled in
Unaware of the evil that attacked from within.

It came and it hit me, my defences were down
There wasn't a warning, no movement, no sound,
My body was strong, my hands filled with power,
So I worked unprotected every minute, every hour.

I am a strong man who was brought to his knees
By the cold cruel hunger of a silent disease,
If I knew that to work was like going to war,
I would have dug in and fought a long time before.

All my life I've been ready and willing to fight,
Now I lay in the deepest and darkest of night
Kept awake by the sound of my own shallow breath,
And I wait and I long for a merciful death.

For one must listen, you must understand,
Keep death at a distance and fear close at hand.
Please heed this advice, it's all that I'm giving,
I'm too weak to rise up and fight for the living.

Mr. Speaker, I didn't think I would get up and read a poem in the Legislature, but this was one that was found in the archives and was written by a member from Local 6500 who passed away.

I'd like to thank everyone for joining us today and for their work on this issue and on occupational diseases generally. This has been a long journey for many people in this room and an emotional journey for the victims and their families affected by the issues addressed within this bill.

Today we are calling on the Legislature to right a wrong and support this bill and the spirit of fair compensation for workers injured on the job.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

ESTATE ADMINISTRATION TAX FAIRNESS ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 CONCERNANT L'ÉQUITÉ DE L'IMPÔT SUR L'ADMINISTRATION DES SUCCESSIONS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 64, standing in the name of Mr. McNaughton.

Mr. McNaughton has moved second reading of Bill 120, An Act to amend the Estate Administration Tax Act, 1998. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We will take the vote at the end of business.

GENDER-NEUTRAL LANGUAGE LANGAGE NON SEXISTE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Thibeault has moved private member's notice of motion number 56.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

PROTECTING VICTIMS OF OCCUPATIONAL DISEASE ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA PROTECTION DES VICTIMES DE MALADIES PROFESSIONNELLES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. French has moved second reading of Bill 98, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, with respect to loss of earnings and survivor benefits.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is being referred to—the member for Oshawa?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I refer it to finance and economic affairs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to the finance and economic committee. Agreed? Agreed.

ESTATE ADMINISTRATION TAX
FAIRNESS ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 CONCERNANT L'ÉQUITÉ
DE L'IMPÔT SUR L'ADMINISTRATION
DES SUCCESSIONS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1605 to 1610.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Would all members please take their seats.

Mr. McNaughton has moved second reading of Bill 120, An Act to amend the Estate Administration Tax Act, 1998. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	MacLaren, Jack	Munro, Julia
Bailey, Robert	Martow, Gila	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	McNaughton, Monte	Walker, Bill

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Dhillon, Vic	MacCharles, Tracy
Anderson, Granville	Dickson, Joe	Malhi, Harinder
Baker, Yvan	Dong, Han	Mangat, Amrit
Ballard, Chris	Duguid, Brad	McMahon, Eleanor
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Fife, Catherine	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Bisson, Gilles	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Bradley, James J.	Forster, Cindy	Potts, Arthur
Chan, Michael	French, Jennifer K.	Sattler, Peggy
Colle, Mike	Hoggarth, Ann	Singh, Jagmeet
Coteau, Michael	Hoskins, Eric	Tabuns, Peter
Crack, Grant	Hunter, Mitzie	Thebaault, Glenn
Damerla, Dipika	Kiwala, Sophie	Vanthof, John
Del Duca, Steven	Kwinter, Monte	Wong, Soo
Delaney, Bob	Leal, Jeff	

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 9; the nays are 41.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENDING COAL
FOR CLEANER AIR ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015
SUR L'ABANDON DU CHARBON
POUR UN AIR PLUS PROPRE

Mr. Murray moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 9, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act to require the cessation of coal use to generate electricity at generation facilities / Projet de loi 9, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement

pour exiger la cessation de l'utilisation du charbon pour produire de l'électricité dans les installations de production.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to the order of the House dated June 2, 2015, I'm now required to put the question.

Mr. Murray has moved second reading of Bill 9, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act to require the cessation of coal use to generate electricity at generation facilities.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

"Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote for second reading of Bill 9 be deferred until Monday, September 28, 2015."

Second reading vote deferred.

PROTECTING CONDOMINIUM
OWNERS ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA PROTECTION
DES PROPRIÉTAIRES
DE CONDOMINIUMS

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 23, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 106, An Act to amend the Condominium Act, 1998, to enact the Condominium Management Services Act, 2015 and to amend other Acts with respect to condominiums / Projet de loi 106, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur les condominiums, édictant la Loi de 2015 sur les services de gestion de condominiums et modifiant d'autres lois en ce qui concerne les condominiums.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to have the opportunity—

Applause.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you. I've got a cheering section here.

Anyway, it's a pleasure to be here today to speak to Bill 106. The House leader of the government is going to try and get me a question—he says "next week." So he's working on that—frugally, anyway. So we'll try and get one. I deserve one, for sure.

This most recent legislation that I'm speaking to is from 1998. Today, almost 1.3 million Ontarians live in condos. More than 50% of the homes being built today in Ontario are condos, and there are currently 700,000 condos in Ontario as a whole, with another 51,000 units under construction. That's up from 270,000 units in 2001.

In 2012, the government began its Condominium Act review, which was a three-stage public engagement process aimed at modernizing this legislation. This was in

response to growing concerns from condo owners and managers. The key issues identified in this review included governance, dispute resolution, financial management, consumer protection and condominium management qualifications.

Some of the key points of that: We, as a caucus, realized that home ownership is one of the best investments a family can make. Families need to know that they will be protected once they've made this substantial financial commitment.

This bill provides many important new consumer and financial protection measures.

We are concerned about the increased red tape and bureaucracy contained in this bill. There will be two new administrative authorities created—surprise, surprise—from this government, which will require a large amount of capital for start-up.

This act would come into force the day the act is proclaimed.

To get to my own notes—those were overview: I rise today to speak to the Protecting Condominium Owners Act, 2015, that was introduced by the honourable member from Sault Ste. Marie. Over the last 20 years, condominiums have increased in their popularity and their number across this province. The epicentre of that growth is no doubt right here in the city of Toronto, surrounding us in the few blocks right around here.

In just the eight years that I have had the privilege of serving as MPP for Sarnia–Lambton at Queen's Park, the number of condo developments in this city has just mushroomed. In my own neighbourhood, I see every day, when I look out my window in the evening or in the morning, the workers hard at work building these condos. There's hardly a street or corner in this city that isn't being impacted by the development of condos.

Personally, when I'm in Toronto, I also rent a condo as my residence in a building not far from this Legislature. Dozens of new condo developments have been proposed, launched, started construction and finished in only a few-block radius around the building that I've called home in Toronto in the last few years.

I recall that a former colleague of mine, the new mayor of Toronto, Mr. John Tory, made part of his election campaign the promise to better coordinate the never-ending construction in the downtown core so that residents, businesses and traffic would not be constantly impacted by condo construction. We'll have to see where that discussion goes.

Hon. James J. Bradley: There was a good man: John Tory.

Mr. Robert Bailey: He certainly was. I agree with the House leader.

I will leave the discussion of how that is going to the councillors at city hall of Toronto.

The statistics show that today approximately 1.3 million Ontarians live in condos. There are currently 700,000 units in Ontario, with another 51,000 under construction. Condo development is also taking place in

communities outside of the GTA, although it may be for different reasons.

My community of Sarnia–Lambton has 3,030 residential condo units, with the majority of those residences located along the beautiful waterfront of Sarnia, Point Edward and Corunna. I would urge all members in the House to take the time to visit Sarnia–Lambton and the beautiful county of Lambton and share in that vista of the river.

1620

In fact, according to the local MPAC records, the first condo built in Lambton county—this was news to me—was actually constructed in 1950, so 65 years ago this year.

As an aside, I want to thank Justin Johnson of the Chatham-Kent and Lambton county MPAC office for providing my office and myself with these numbers.

Whereas the price point of a traditional single family home in urban centres like Toronto is completely unaffordable for many, condominiums represent an entry point into housing market for young people. In Sarnia–Lambton, the condo market is usually an option for a different demographic of our community.

While all the news out of Toronto is about a housing bubble and the average cost of a detached home being well over \$1 million, single-family dwellings in Sarnia–Lambton are still relatively very affordable. Market research shows that in Sarnia–Lambton, the condominium market is most appealing to buyers looking to downsize from their present family homes. Condominiums in Sarnia–Lambton are able to attract buyers based on those amenities, proximity to the waterfront and parks, and the lifestyle that Sarnia–Lambton brings.

Prime examples of this in Sarnia–Lambton are the Sandy Lane condominiums in Sarnia, which are ideally situated with views of Sarnia's expansive Canatara Park, the azure waters of Lake Huron and the iconic twin spans of the Blue Water Bridge, which I know the House leader from the government has toured many times when he's crossed between Point Edward and Port Huron and Sarnia.

The Blue Water Bridge, North America's second-busiest border crossing, is located in Point Edward. A lot of people say Sarnia, but it's actually in Point Edward, where my constituency office is located. There are also options in my community like the Mariner Village in Point Edward, which allows marine enthusiasts to dock their boat right at their doorstep.

Condo ownership in Sarnia–Lambton is a great option for those who want to have an active lifestyle in the community without all the worries and yardwork that come with traditional home ownership. As such, I think it is worth re-examining the protections that are in place for people investing in and purchasing condos. I and my caucus will be supporting this bill when it comes to a vote at second reading, and I hope that with the review of the committee, it can be strengthened even more.

The bill summary indicates that the Protecting Condominium Owners Act, 2015, will allow for the estab-

lishment of a condominium authority that would be responsible for administering condo owner education, dispute resolution and a condo corporate registry. The condo authority will have the responsibility to administer the Condominium Authority Tribunal, I suppose otherwise known as CAT, which would resolve disputes through case management, mediation and adjudication—a lot of big words there.

The bill will also create a separate licensing authority to administer licensing of condo managers. This will be done through a proposed new Condominium Management Services Act, the CMSA—I'll talk more about these acronyms later—which will create a training and education program for managers and establish a code of ethics for condo managers. This act would also set specific qualifications to be a licensed manager.

I should note that the government believes that all these new authorities and tribunals will be run by only adding a \$1 to \$3 charge to the monthly condo fee of condo owners. It reminds me of something to do with hydro and a cup of coffee a day. But anyway, I won't go there; I digress.

I would have to be totally honest: I don't believe this number really represents the true impact that will eventually be seen on condo owner bills. The government has a well-documented history of lowballing numbers and an equally well-documented history of allowing bureaucracy operating costs to balloon. Yesterday's release of the Auditor General's report into the CCACs is evidence of that.

I think my concerns on the cost of these new agencies are shared by many. These new administrative authorities will require a large amount of capital for start-up, and it won't be long before they're back, cap in hand, to the condo owners, seeking increases to that monthly fee.

I do, however, see the need for improved oversight of the operations of condo boards and condo management companies. With hundreds of units in some buildings, the boards of condo corporations can often be tasked with the management of millions of dollars in funds. How that money is being handled is a growing concern for many, myself included. Each of the Toronto daily newspapers devote regular column space to stories of condo boards and managers run amok, and condo owners left in debt and on the hook.

I support this bill's aim to strengthen financial management by providing condo owners with more information about financial matters affecting their investment. They say that the home is the biggest investment most people will ever make. If you're going to enjoy it, you need to know that things are being handled in a professional manner.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's a pleasure for me to rise today on behalf of the people I represent in London West to respond briefly to some of the comments that were made by the member for Sarnia about Bill 106, the Protecting Condominium Owners Act. The member for Sarnia

expressed a certain amount of skepticism, some reservations, about whether this bill would do what it says it's supposed to do, which is to protect condominium owners. Certainly, that is skepticism, a reservation, that we on this side of the House, members of the NDP caucus, share.

Much of the meat of this bill is left to regulations. Despite the length of this bill—it is a very lengthy document of about 160 pages—still, much of the actual protections that consumers, condo buyers, are looking for are going to be left to the regulations. And what we saw, Speaker, when the expert panel was established by the government to come up with this bill, is that condo owners had very little voice in the development of those regulations. We remain very concerned that the interests of condo owners will not be protected. Condo owners will not have an opportunity to express their concerns as this bill moves forward and as these regulations are developed. The tribunal that is created really is much more representative of the interests of developers and managers than of owners. We have some concerns about this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm happy to spend a couple of minutes this afternoon lending my voice to the discussion and debate that we're having on this very important legislation that I know has been, in various forms, talked about a number of times here in this legislative chamber.

I want to give credit to the minister responsible for this legislation, for bringing it forward. I couldn't help, in listening to the member from Sarnia talk about the experience that he has in his own community—representing the wonderful community of Vaughan, just on the edge of Toronto, and having lived there for the last 25 or 26 years, I see my friend and colleague across the way from the neighbouring riding of Thornhill. I think she would agree that our community just on the edge of Toronto has, over the last quarter century, changed quite substantially with respect to the various options of housing that are available, including seeing a number of, for the very first time, large-scale condo projects. I can think of one that is actually in the riding of Thornhill but in the city of Vaughan that is now towering, I want to say, more than 30 storeys at the corner of Jane and Highway 7.

We see that right across the 905. We see, with a number of initiatives including the growth plan and the greenbelt, a significant move over the last generation to more sustainable housing and more intensified development, particularly along transit corridors and in proximity to transit corridors. It's one of the reasons, with the explosion of the growth of condos, that we do need to move forward with this legislation.

I was reviewing some of the notes as they relate to this bill and I was looking at the fact that this legislation, if passed—hopefully, when passed—would increase protections for condo owners and Ontarians purchasing a

condo by requiring condominium managers to be licensed.

There is a long list of items in this legislation that, when I think of those who are choosing this kind of available housing, particularly those empty-nesters in my community who are looking to live still in Vaughan and have a sustainable way of life that they look forward to enjoying—I think it's extremely important, notwithstanding some of the concerns mentioned by the member from London, that we move forward with this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I want to thank the member from Vaughan for the segue into the fact that I feel that condo development is very challenging for all of us. I think that we have all dealt with complaints about the management and the elections of management in the condos in our ridings.

1630

But specifically I want to address, as the member from Vaughan just said, transit and infrastructure surrounding the condos. To allow condos to be developed without the proper infrastructure is a big mistake; and we are seeing that in York region, where this Liberal government has invested over \$640 million building bus lanes without any data supporting that there's extra ridership. The public is asking—it's their tax dollars. They want to see the Yonge subway expanded. In fact, one of the big developments is the World on Yonge. It was designed to have a connection to a future subway in its underground parking levels. The fact that this enormous complex was developed and built and completed and is now occupied without any access to a subway means that we have thousands more cars on the roads. Not just in York region, Mr. Speaker; those cars are travelling to downtown Toronto to access jobs and hospitals and other things.

What we need to do is have a comprehensive plan. Yes, we need to have better management of our condos and we need to have some fairness and better oversight for the residents. It is a big investment, as we all know. But also, we need to see better planning of these condo projects in terms of the impact that they will have on neighbourhoods and the amount of green space that is still needed to support the number of people living in the units.

So I look forward to working with my neighbour in Vaughan and seeing that we can improve things for York region.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you to the member from Sarnia—Lambton for his comments. I want to weigh in a little bit on the member from Thornhill's comments about, yes, we're building hundreds of condominiums across this province, most of them in the greater Toronto area, but our infrastructure is not keeping up with the approval of those condominiums. I hear it in the hospitals, from my friends who work in emergency depart-

ments, where the emergency departments are bursting at the seams because there are so many people living in urban areas now. The hospitals are not keeping up with the ability to expand their emergency departments, their day treatment programs, their outpatient clinics, to actually see the number of people that are actually moving into the city. That is problematic.

So part of that whole development piece needs to be: Do we have enough hospitals? Do we have enough transit? Do we have enough doggy parks? It's another issue that I hear from people here in the city of Toronto. Nobody is opposed to people having animals in their condominiums, but when you have great big dogs and little dogs, there need to be places for them to do what they need to do, whether that is part of the actual condo development or a dog park, just like we put parks for kids in neighbourhoods. That's another piece that needs to be looked at.

When condos are coming into smaller communities like mine, you need to be looking at, are we going to approve a 25-storey condominium in a side of the city where there are single-family homes that are at most two storeys and have people towering over this whole neighbourhood? So there are a lot of things to think about, and not just kind of in-filling and making sure that we're using the best use of space.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the speaker from Sarnia.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a privilege to rise again and respond to all the members who spoke. I didn't write down their names, but anyway, they know who they are.

It was a privilege to speak to this bill. Like I say, pretty well all of us in this chamber probably at one time or other either live in a condo now or have a number of condos back in our respective ridings. I think we're well qualified to speak to this. I think everyone wants to see more oversight because there have been injustices and there have been people who have financially paid a penalty, through no fault of their own. I certainly applaud the minister for introducing this legislation.

I'm looking forward to the rest of the afternoon, hearing the rest of the debate and hearing ideas of how this bill, if it goes on to committee, can be improved and made a better bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I'm sitting somewhere near to the member who actually championed this issue for some years: our good friend Rosario Marchese, the former member for—what was his riding?—Trinity-Spadina. Mr. Marchese was quite adamant about trying to get something done on this particular issue, because in his riding it's a reality that condos are a big part of what makes up his riding, as it is with a whole bunch of other members across this province. But specifically for those members living in urban centres, such as Mr. Marchese, this was a huge issue.

Just in passing, it always kind of amazed me when I talked to some of my colleagues from Toronto, on all

sides of the House. In places like Trinity-Spadina and others, you'd find they'd be saying that the turnover of people coming into the riding year over year completely changes the dynamics of the riding over a period of five to 10 years. In my particular case, in Timmins—James Bay, I can literally pick up the phone book for some communities from 1990, when I was first elected, and still find the same people who were there when I originally got elected. In the types of communities that I represent, families have been there for a long time. They don't move on. They've got their own family home, and they've made those communities where they live. The reality in places like Toronto—in Trinity-Spadina and other places—is that there's a large turnover of people, and a large part of that is because of condos. I always found that to be rather fascinating, and it should be somewhat politically challenging, I would say, for the member representing the riding.

That being said, it's good to see that the government is moving on this particular initiative. I don't think it's to the degree we would like to have seen—the bill as proposed by Mr. Marchese—because there are a number of things that are not dealt with in this bill that he long advocated for being done. It would have been nice to see those things done, and who knows, once this bill goes to committee, we might get lucky, and the government might see its way. And who knows, we might even see Mr. Marchese show up as a deputant on the bill. You never know. Anything is possible.

Here, I think, are some of the larger issues. I hear them, not only from people living here in Toronto; we have condominiums where I live as well. It's a fact of life. Most large urban centres have condominiums as a choice for people when it comes to where they're going to live. In the city of Timmins, we have a number of condominiums that have been built over the last number of years that have been quite popular, especially for those—it tends to be, where I come from, people who raised their family, had a house, got a lot of equity in the house and decided, "You know what? We need to downscale, so we're going to move into a condominium-style apartment," and that's where they've ended up.

The biggest complaint that you hear, other than some of the managerial issues and the management companies and the boards and stuff, is the fees. You walk into the condominium thinking you're going to pay a certain amount of money. You're told, when you buy, "Here's the price you're going to pay to purchase this condo." You agree on the price, obviously; you make the offer. You know that you're going to have to pay a certain amount of money to the condominium corporation every month in order to pay for those in-kind services that go on to maintain the building, and you're prepared for that. However, the rates tend to go up far more than what you tended to believe when you bought the place. So the issue of how much people have to pay in condo fees is one that's very near and dear to the hearts of many condo owners, and this bill doesn't go as far as I think it needs to, to deal with that.

Now, the bill is going to committee, so we're going to hear from people and we're going to hear what the experts have to say, and hopefully the government is going to want to move some amendments. But I can tell you that one of the largest issues that I hear, when it comes to condominiums, at least in my constituency, is that people walk in, they're told this is what you're going to pay when it comes to condominium fees, and you expect you're going to have some increases over the years. But all of a sudden, wham, they're whacked, and it's not protected under the Rent Control Act, because condominium fees are not considered rent. They can go up at whatever rate the market will bear, and in some cases that could be quite astonishing.

The other reality in the bill that I think needs to be dealt with is the whole issue of management companies. Often what happens—and this is what I've seen in one particular condominium, where the builder hired a particular management firm to be able to manage the building, and lo and behold, that didn't work out so well. The people who bought the condominium were not happy with the services they were getting from this particular management corporation, and there was one heck of a fight—this was back maybe about 20 years ago—on the part of the residents, with the management company and with others involved who were trying to get this whole thing resolved.

1640

There needs to be some kind of a mechanism so the owners who end up owning these condominiums have a greater say about that particular issue, about who's going to manage their particular condominium building. Because if you're calling the condominium manager over issues in your apartment that you're not happy with, or issues with the building, and you're not being responded to, and you're an owner and you're paying for these people to maintain this building to a certain standard and to do certain things and those things or standards aren't met—my God, that will drive people over the deep end. The bill lacks in that particular area somewhat. I think we need to be able to take a look at how we deal with that.

I'm going to digress a little bit, Mr. Speaker, because it's a housing bill. I just have to put these two cents in, because it's an issue that is of utmost urgency in First Nations communities across not only northern Ontario but probably in other places as well. That is the desperate lack of housing and the utter failure on the part of the federal government to respond to the housing crisis in First Nations communities, not just in my riding but across Ontario and the rest of Canada. We have people who are living 20 to 25 people in a house, not because they all want to live together but because there's nowhere else to go. The federal government has done little in the way of improvement when it comes to funding to build new housing. Maybe one of the things that we're able to do is that we could build some co-op housing or some not-for-profit housing stock in communities such as that, or other kinds of housing projects, as we understand them in the province of Ontario under the not-for-profit

housing model. It would give us an opportunity to be able to provide housing to people that need it.

I'll give you just one story, Mr. Speaker. I know I digress a bit but I really need to put this on the record. In Attawapiskat, there is a wonderful story called the De Beers diamond mine. When they built the diamond mine, they had trailers where they had the workers stay when the construction site was building the mine. Essentially, they're small rooms. They're in a trailer with about 20 rooms in it. The rooms are all about 12 feet by 14 feet, pretty small things, just a place for a bed and a desk.

De Beers, because there was a housing crisis in Attawapiskat, made some of these trailers available to the community in order to deal with the emergency housing crisis that was going on at the time. They grouped together, I think, about four of these things so that they had two wings of these particular portables set up in order to be able to provide emergency shelter.

That's still there. It's been there for six or seven years now, maybe even longer. We have entire families living inside what is essentially a contractor's room that you would normally use when you're building a construction site somewhere. It's quite dangerous. There are not adequate showers. There is not adequate water. One stove for the entire side of the building to use—in other words, there are two stoves for all of the units that are in there for people to be able to cook their meals. It's a fire hazard. It's just a horrid, horrid situation.

So when you look at housing needs—I understand that condominiums are quite a different issue and they have their own particular issues that need to be dealt with, but I think that at one point the province has to think about, how do we step in to become part of the solution when it comes to dealing with the inadequate housing stock in First Nations communities? Yes, it's a federal responsibility—I'm the first to admit that—but if we don't become part of the solution, I have no confidence in waiting for the federal government to resolve this particular issue, because it's an issue they've created over a period of years.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank you for this time in debate and allowing me to digress a little bit to talk about First Nations housing in the short time that I had.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I'm absolutely delighted to stand up and speak to this bill, because those of you who know me a little bit know that this is an issue that is really close to my heart. In fact, one of the first things that I did when I got elected in 2011 was to bring forward a private member's resolution seeking that we find alternative ways of dispute resolution within the condo community. So I'm absolutely delighted that of course this bill goes much, much further than my original private member's resolution, which focused on dispute resolution.

I just wanted to say that here at Queen's Park we do many things. Everything that we do, we do for the benefit

of Ontarians, but every once in a while a bill comes forward that truly, truly touches the personal lives of Ontarians. This is one of those. For almost all of us, the vast majority of Ontarians, our single biggest asset—our savings—is always our own home. A condominium is a home. What this bill really does is provide protection to the owners of their homes, the owners of these condominium units—their single largest asset. I cannot underscore the importance of this bill.

The details of the bill have been discussed quite significantly in this House, so I'm not going to into that. But I do want to speak to the bigger picture, which is, why are we doing this? We're doing this primarily because it's time to update the Condominium Act. It's time to ensure that the single largest asset that most Canadians will own, when they own it, is well protected. I'm very much supportive of this bill, and I look forward to the bill passing, becoming an act, and being able to go back to my constituents and say, "Here's a promise that I made, and we've been able to keep it." Thank you so much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Thornhill.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to comment on the member from Timmins-James Bay, that he's right. Sometimes people are afraid of condos in general, because why purchase a condo as an investment when the maintenance fees can be out of your control, as well as repairs are often needed, and that can be out of your control as well?

It's a scary thing for a lot of people to invest in condos when they hear so much negative hype about management companies and expenses. I think we've all had people who are so frustrated at dealing with the local and municipal representatives in terms of dealing with their condos that they reach out to our constituency staff, which really isn't in our mandate but we're always there to help our constituents. I've already made a couple of friendly phone calls to condo boards asking them for clarification. I understand their frustration as well, because they're volunteers and they're often in a community where you can't please everybody and everybody has a different opinion. It can create incredible animosity within these buildings, which have their own level of government. I think that that's what we need to really understand here: There's the federal government, the provincial government, the municipal government, and now we're dealing with boards at the condo level.

I'll just give you an example. I got a message today on Facebook from somebody who's complaining that in her condo they're holding their annual general meeting this week. Monday and Tuesday are actually Jewish holy days. The condo has a majority of Jewish people, and they're holding it on holy days. Obviously, the board members aren't as observant or as religious. So it's very frustrating for people dealing with these little communities within their community.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to rise to respond to the comments that were offered by the member from Timmins–James Bay. I think he gave us some helpful context as we're considering this bill, and that is the fact that this condo act had its genesis, in large part, with the efforts that were made by the New Democratic Party and particularly our esteemed former colleague Rosario Marchese, the former member for Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Marchese's first bill to reform the Condominium Act was brought to this Legislature back in 2007. That is eight years ago. It has taken eight years and four iterations of this bill—we've seen two Premiers over that period—but finally we have arrived at a place where we are going to do something to address some of the most egregious issues that come up in the condo world.

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As another member just said, the condo world really is a world unto itself. It's like a mini level of government that is created there, with condo boards of directors having absolute authority over condo owners.

One of our concerns, Speaker, that we have expressed on numerous occasions—and I do want to say that the NDP is supporting this bill. However, we are very concerned about the fact that the bill will not address disputes between condo owners and developers. This is one of the issues that we hear about all the time in our ridings with condo owners who have seen their life savings vanish because of unscrupulous developers and managers who have really jeopardized the value of their properties.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The deputy House leader.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I understand that the opposition parties have taken a good deal of time to debate these bills and they're now continuing to put up speakers, despite the fact that the bill has been debated for over seven hours. Over 40 members of the Legislature have spoken to this bill or participated in debate during questions and comments. The government extended debate beyond the normal threshold of 6.5 hours so more members would have an opportunity to speak on this bill.

Listening to the debate, it's been clear that the majority of members appear to be in support of the bill. It is time, in the view of the government, that the bill pass second reading and be referred to committee, where we think some really good work can be done. In committee, members from all parties will hear from the relevant stakeholders. I can't wait. I'll be sitting in on committee if I have the opportunity to do so. In committee, members will have that opportunity to move amendments, if they choose to do so, in what they believe would be the strengthening of the bill.

Continuing debate today signals there's no true desire to have further meaningful debate on this bill. It appears, from the point of view, I think, of any objective observer, that this is just extending the debate for the purpose of extending the debate. I would love to see the opposition parties stop this particular stalling, as some people might call it—I wouldn't speak that dramatically about it—and

move this legislation forward so we can get on to Bill 85, the good government act; Bill 112, the energy consumer protection act; Bill 113, Police Record Checks Reform Act; and Bill 115, Electoral Boundaries Act.

We on this side of the House believe that moving this bill to committee will give that opportunity for public input, an opportunity for moving the amendments, and I suspect many of the members of this Legislature would like to be back in their home ridings about this time of day.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Timmins–James Bay. You have two minutes.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, I feel the guillotine coming, Mr. Speaker. I feel like Robespierre, who stood there in Parliament when he was hauled off to the guillotine and about to lose his head.

Listen, I just have to say two things to my friend the dean of the Legislature. I remember him sitting on this side of the House and talking about the importance of members having the ability to speak to bills if they so choose, because, after all, that is one of the very few rights that we have in this Legislature: to be able to speak to legislation. If members want to use that right, I don't think it should be viewed as, oh, we're stalling.

I had some legitimate things I wanted to say about the bill. I only had 10 minutes to give, and I did what I did and I said what I had to say, and that was, for me, all I needed to do in this debate. There are other members that may want to do the same, but the government shouldn't read into it that we are at seven hours of debate and that somehow this is a big filibuster on the part of the opposition. You sit at the government House leader meetings with me as the House leader for the New Democrats. We haven't had a discussion about, "Are you guys willing to give this one up?", to trade off for anything. We haven't had any of those discussions. Our House leaders' meeting is coming on Monday. We'll see where this ends.

I don't think this is a bill that most people oppose. As you can hear, most of us are in favour of this bill. It's not going to be dragged through the Legislature for any long period of time, and I just want to say, on the part of the New Democrats, that we're not a part of any filibuster on this bill. There are some people who have legitimate concerns that they want to put on the record. And this is a bill that is important to our caucus because our friend Rosario Marchese tried for years to be able to move this issue forward, and we're taking some pride in seeing that there's some movement on this legislation coming forward on the part of the government.

For that, we want to say job well done on the part of Rosario for having pushed this for as long as he has. I look forward to hearing what other members in this debate have to say.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Welland.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you, Speaker.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I thought you were listening to me.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I wasn't listening to you, Minister. In fact, I wanted the opportunity to speak to this, because I'm probably one of maybe a few people who actually have been involved in this whole condo process as a condo owner, right from the very beginning. It isn't really about this bill; right? We're talking about real people here with real stories.

I can tell you, last week when—I think it was the member from Bramlea-Gore-Malton who got up and spoke to it first and I had a two-minute hit during that debate. From that one two-minute hit I got 50 tweets; 50 people tweeted me and the member from Bramlea-Gore-Malton, thanking us for raising important issues about the condo act in the Legislature. That was in a period of about six hours after that debate.

I actually wanted to spend some time talking about the things that these condo owners actually experienced in their time. The condo that I purchased and moved into in Welland about seven years ago—the developer at the time was a company called Pointe of View, now called the Carlisle Group. They were from Calgary then and they're back in Calgary now. You'll all be thankful that they actually moved out of the province. If you Google them, they're still there under the new Carlisle Group; they come up as Pointe of View as well. The horror stories that people have experienced with this company—and they built across North America. They built in San Francisco; they built in other states across the United States. At the same time they were building our condo in Welland, they were building a condo in Brampton; and they experienced the exact same issues and problems I'm going to tell you about.

You talk about special assessments. When you Google this Pointe of View company, now called the Carlisle Group, some people have already had \$180,000 per person worth of special assessments—a \$4-million repair to one building in Calgary and all the unit owners have had special assessments of \$180,000. Imagine you have put your life savings into a condo—I can tell you, in my building in Welland, many of the people who moved into that building—it's a four-storey, 70-unit building—were in their mid-seventies, into their early eighties, some were as old as 90. They sold their house, and houses don't sell in Welland for \$1 million like they do in Toronto. Houses sell on average for—a 50-year-old house or 40-year-old house might sell for \$200,000 or \$250,000. They actually had to take a mortgage, these seniors, to actually the additional costs of these condos.

You move into these condos because you think that you are going to have stress-free living. In fact, for seven years, it has been a nightmare for many of the people who live in my condo, although they have a great support group. Then you elect condo boards—and I sat on my condo board for the first year when the transition happened—and you have no say on when they turn that condo over to you. When the city says, "Well, this condo is inhabitable, it's meeting building codes from our perspective," the condo board then just says, "We're turning it over," regardless of whether there are things that need to be fixed or not.

So right from the developers to the builders, to the engineers and the architects who sign off for the developer, there are problems. The developer and builder hire these experts to actually sign off on these buildings. They rubber-stamp that everything is fine and dandy but at the end of the day, it's not.

1700

In my building, half of the roof blew off the first winter. The roof had been installed improperly. They installed a makeup air unit in the attic, and there's one woman now who still has a lawsuit going seven years later. She bought the unit; her mother was going to rent from her. Her mother was, I don't know, 80, 85 years old. The mother could not live in the building because of the vibration of the air conditioning and heating unit that was in the attic, because it was installed improperly, because there wasn't enough room to put the appropriate padding and springs. They would have had to change the roofline to actually make that happen. So the vibration in this condo, which was right next to and right under this attic, was over top of her apartment. The light fixtures started to fall from the ceiling; the drywall started to crack in the corners; the cabinets came away from the wall. The woman had to move out.

For seven years, this woman has been in a legal battle with the developer, with the city and with the condo board, because they're saying that the condo board should be responsible for this, as well. She is still at the point that she has not settled this and she has not been able to rent that unit out in seven years. So imagine all the money that condo owner is actually out.

When you get to the point that you start to make your complaints to Taron, you think, "I'm a condo owner. I've paid \$700 for my Taron insurance." But, in fact, once the assessments start and you start to have a look at what the fixes are that you need, it isn't Taron who sends out their people to actually support your claims. In our case, we had the heating and air conditioning; we had the roof unit; we had improper fire walls between floors. There was a lot of work to be done in this building. Taron required us to hire experts to write reports to the tune of—I think at the end of the day we paid the engineering company that we hired almost \$100,000 out of our condo fees to write reports to support our claims to Taron.

That isn't the way that it should be. We shouldn't be having to use our condo fees to do that. If you pay a fee, like when you build a new house and you pay a fee to Taron, that should suffice to have their people come out and see if the work was done appropriately, if the work actually complies with the building code. But the developers and the builders all say, "The city signed off. The city said that the building is inhabitable, so it's the city's problem."

Well, I don't know about in your ridings, but in my riding we have two building inspectors for the entire city. I would say that in the city of Toronto they don't have enough building inspectors to actually keep up with the work that condo builders and developers are moving forward with.

I'm not here to say that all builders and developers are bad builders, because they're not. I know there are lots of good condo builders and developers here in the city of Toronto, and probably across the country, but there are some bad ones. Unfortunately, in my case we had a bad one, right?

At the end of the day, Tarion actually makes you jump through all these loopholes, and God help you if you miss one day. So there's a one-year assessment; there's a two-year assessment; there's a seven-year assessment, based on certain things in your unit. If you miss that by one day, you are out of luck to even try to claim anything back through that process.

You know, the bill is good. The bill addresses a lot of things. It addresses things between condo boards and owners, between condo boards and managers. But in my experience, the biggest problems were not between a condo board member and condo owners; the big disputes were between the condo board, our management company and Tarion, or the condo board and the developer or the builder. I mean, those are where the real problems lie, and it shouldn't take seven years to actually get those kinds of issues addressed.

Most recently, we're told that the footings in our building are not appropriate to support the weight of the building, and so we now have experts in having a look at it. It's probably going to cost this one 70-unit condo building \$300,000 to \$400,000 to reinforce those footings. We already paid engineers \$100,000 to look at that four or five years ago, but we're right back there. People will be getting assessments once again. They've already received special assessments to the tune of a couple of thousand dollars, and that's in addition to their condo fees.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm glad to rise this afternoon in support of Bill 106. I listened attentively this afternoon to the member from Welland, and I'm very pleased to hear her comments about the importance of this bill, but more importantly her support of the bill.

Of course, there is room for improvements, especially as we go forward to the committee so that we can bring in some witnesses to clarify some of the pieces and strengthen the bill. As a member in the eastern part of the city of Toronto, I know that this particular bill is very important to my constituents. I know that almost every corner in my riding has a condominium. They range from three storeys to 40-plus storeys. One of the pieces that my constituents—especially those who are living in new condominiums—are very interested in is the issue of dispute resolution.

We know that amongst neighbours, when you have language issues or you may have certain eating habits, people complain about different things. I think that everybody in this chamber receives different calls from their constituents. I know I've received different calls specifically dealing with condominiums. If this particular legislation is passed, it will reduce the time of resolving

disputes amongst condominium owners and the board as well as between homeowners, because this is recognized as home ownership. It is very important that this does not get tied up in the court system, where it creates costs for both parties, but more importantly, the issues get laboured into disputes year after year.

I'm really, really excited about this proposed legislation, but also to strengthen and protect these homeowners, because at the end of the day, this is one of the largest investments for these owners and Ontarians across the province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a privilege to stand and speak in reply to the member from Welland as she outlined some of the issues and concerns that she had with this act, which she'd like to see improved—get it to committee and we can see it improved. That was our big concern—that we think that people do want to support this bill. They want to see it improved because there are a number of people in all of our ridings that in some way or form live in condos. It's a big investment, as a number of people have alluded to. I have a number of calls in my office, even though I don't have nearly the condos that people in Toronto obviously do—the GTA. I do have over 3,000, which is quite a few, in my riding—a larger number than I would have thought until I did some research on this.

It certainly has been time well spent researching this bill. You certainly learn a number of things about your own riding as well as, like I say, Toronto. I get up every morning, I walk down the street, down Wellesley and across Bay, and see all the condos there taking shape just in the last two years. I've been here eight years now, and it's just unbelievable how these towers go up and the work that's taking place there.

Mr. Bill Walker: Tell them where all the gravel comes from, Bob.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes. The gravel, I think, comes from up in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, and our member from Dufferin-Caledon—that's always important: building materials and aggregate.

But anyway, Speaker, I look forward to the rest of the debate—a pleasure to speak.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Speaker. This is the first time I've spoken to this. Apparently a lot of people have spoken to it, but I know a lot who haven't.

To make a long story short, I'd like to thank the member from Welland. There's nothing like having an actual owner talk about the experiences of her fellow condo owners and her experience. It really amazes me that there's only one actual owner on the expert panel. Most of them are made up of builders, developers and all the other people who make the money as opposed to investing in their own condos and having to live with the rules that are in place.

1710

This is certainly long overdue. I commend all the parties, including the government, to bring forth something to protect condo owners because they certainly need the protection. The resolution process for problems certainly was archaic, to say the least, with too many levels to deal with—you could go two, three years in a lawsuit before you got anything done, and it cost you more than the repairs you would have had to do. That's a bit of a fiasco that is going to be dealt with, I hope.

My good friend from St. Catharines, that member speaks up and talks about stalling and time. Well, you know, with all due respect, they do have a process at their hands called "time allocation." If they wanted to use that—

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: It's six and a half hours—they could use that. If they want to push their bills through without full debate from all the members, they could do that.

It amazes me when they say, "Let's get it to committee. Let's rush it to committee." Well, Speaker, with all due respect, when it gets to committee and the subcommittee determines how much time, who you notify about it, how the public knows, it can go anywhere from one to 10 days and it usually doesn't go too long. So, really, the public doesn't get their say and they have to come all the way to Toronto to have their say. That's a bit of a fiasco, too.

I guess debating it in the House is useful and productive, and it certainly should be used to its fullest.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I think it was extremely helpful this afternoon when the member from Welland gave a real-life story about the particular challenges one could have as a condo owner. We know that condominium ownership and development is one of the fastest-growing types of housing in the province of Ontario today. I always remark when I walk down Bay Street that even the Catholic diocese of Toronto is in the business. Anybody who's on Bay Street knows that St. Basil's church sold off the top half of their parking lot and now, lo and behold, with God's intervention, they're building a very nice condominium in that particular area.

But, Mr. Speaker, it's time to get on with it. To see this republican-type filibuster of this bill—we've heard, frankly, very articulate speeches, but the job is now that we've got to get this bill to committee. Members on all three sides may have some very good amendments to strengthen this bill because we know that there are challenges—challenges with condominium boards, challenges with condo fees, challenges when special allocations are made. We have a unique opportunity where all sides can get together. Let's wrap up debate this afternoon. Let's get this into committee and let's get amendments made to actually strengthen Bill 106 that will help condominium owners in Ontario and, indeed, assist our good friend from Welland who's going through a real experience. This bill would probably help her in

terms of strengthening legislation to make her experience better with her particular condominium in the wonderful community of Welland, Ontario.

That's what the late Mel Swart would have wanted, a great consumer advocate from Welland. He would have said, "Get it to committee and get it passed." Right, Mr. Bradley?

Mr. Paul Miller: What about Peter? You forgot Peter.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Next week I'll talk about Peter.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. I will now return to the member from Welland. You have two minutes for a response.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thanks to all the members for all their comments.

In fact, this bill won't help this situation. It will not help the situation of making sure that condo owners and residents are served as opposed to architects, engineers, consultants, lawyers and developers. That's who this is going to protect. It isn't going to protect the little condo owner like me and the 70 people in my building. They're not having trouble with their condo board. They want a speedy resolution to their conflicts with builders, architects and engineers who signed off on documents and said that the grading was appropriate, the roofing was done right and all of these kinds of things that they can't get resolved, and it takes six, seven years. They want results for the out-of-pocket expenses where they've had special assessments to the tune of—in my own condo building—about \$2,000 over the last seven years, in addition to their condo fees doubling to pay engineers to fight Tarion. Those are the results that condo owners want to see, and those are the people who I'm sure you're hearing from in your constituency offices as well. I know that I hear from them all the time.

So we'll be proposing a number of amendments, actually, when we go into committee, to make sure that consumers, the little condo owners out there who use their life savings to buy condos, have the full protection, and when they actually buy a condominium, that it's a place they're going to enjoy living in peacefully for the rest of their days.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Mr. Speaker, a point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A point of order: member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I wish to inform you we have three members who are anxious and excited about the opportunity to speak to this bill this afternoon. They're here and they're ready to go. I just wanted you to know that, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would just say to the member that that's not a point of order.

Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to have the opportunity this afternoon to be able to speak to Bill 106, An Act to amend the Condominium Act, 1998, to enact the Condominium Management Services Act, 2015 and to amend other Acts with respect to condominiums. The

bill's short title is the Protecting Condominium Owners Act.

I want to just flip back quickly to 1998, because I was here then and I recall that we spent a lot of time listening in public hearings to those people who wished to come forward and speak about issues that they were running into with their condominiums.

I'm surprised that this act hasn't been reviewed in the almost 20 years since then, because when I listen to many of the people who are speaking here in the Legislature and many of the concerns that have been raised by others, it's clear that there are some systemic issues that simply don't go away. So I'm surprised that the government has not sought to bring forward legislation sooner than this and take a look at how they might make legislative adjustments that would meet the needs of condo owners particularly.

As I say, the condo owners' issues have been brewing for years, and to make sure that Bill 106 addresses these challenges, our party will be making several amendments when it gets into the committee review process. Certainly, I'm hoping that the government will see fit to deal with these amendments appropriately and we can move forward in support.

I want to focus my comments on some of the background on the issue, highlighting some unbelievable but heart-wrenching stories of condo life and also looking at criticism of the bill, including suggestions for reform from condo owners and the building industry.

First, why are we talking about condominiums? Why is Bill 106 before us today? Well, this bill will affect the lives of many Ontarians, as well as many in the condominium industry, from construction to sales.

A condominium unit refers to a unit or set of units where there is a shared ownership of common elements of a property, while the unit owner retains ownership in individual parts of the property. A condo does not necessarily mean a high-rise building, although that image may be the first one that comes to mind. Many condos include buildings that are attached townhouses or single detached houses where the road is the only common element. There are many condos in rural and northern Ontario, so it is important that this legislation work for all Ontario, not just Toronto.

About 1.3 million Ontarians live in condominiums. There are currently 700,000 condo units across Ontario and more than half of all new homes under construction are, in fact, condos. In Toronto, for instance, 20,000 new condo units were built in 2014—20,000. Another 60,000 units are currently under construction. It really boggles the mind to contemplate what kinds of changes that makes to the fabric of the community, what kinds of changes it makes to the structure of municipal government and the services that it has to provide.

1720

But it's not just happening in Toronto. In fact, condo construction is becoming more common in smaller cities across Ontario as consumers are choosing to live in new buildings that are transit-friendly and close to services

and amenities. Condos are increasingly popular in small towns and rural Ontario, including second-home vacation properties such as cottages and winter resorts. The new style of living is here, and it's here to stay, particularly with the price of land and the cost of utilities continuing to increase, although there is large condo development as well as small.

Condominium construction is a major economic driver in Ontario. The industry represents over 100,000 jobs and over \$8 billion in wages. The building and development process for condominiums is incredibly complex. According to the Building Industry and Land Development Association, it takes approximately 10 years to complete a high-rise development project, including four years of construction. Therefore, the market is dependent on a stable legal framework. That is why it's so important to get it right with Bill 106 and other relevant acts, like the Planning Act.

Condominium construction is a major source of municipal revenue. In Toronto alone, government-imposed fees and charges, including section 37 payments for community benefits, section 42 park levy payments, and contributions in public art installations, represent over 17% of the average price of a condominium unit.

As you can imagine, there are many stakeholder groups involved with condominiums. The Condo Owners Association of Toronto, or COA, has been a strong voice for review and reform of the Condominium Act to respond to the problems that owners are experiencing. The following are some of their key questions and comments to be addressed by amendments and discussions in committee:

—Why is Bill 106 self-regulated, with no fines for non-compliance or contravention of the act? Other acts offer protection with fines; i.e., traffic, health and safety, accessibility etc.

—Why was the government's expert condo panel composed of condo service trades representatives with no representation for condo owners and their issues? In turn, there should have been more initial suggestions or recommendations adopted by the ministry based on input from owners versus trades and service providers.

—The new condo office that's proposed is another cash grab by the provincial government. It is completely unfair and unreasonable to increase the monthly fees for owners.

—The proposal to charge all condo unit owners by way of a condo office monthly fee will provide huge dollars. Based on the number of condos in the province, this fund would be far too large. It begs the question: Is this a new condo tax?

—Why are condo owners expected to pay for property managers' licensing when they are employees of property management firms?

I have more examples, but I think this serves to demonstrate the argument we have used in our debate this afternoon that there is more to say, that people do want us to speak up about the issues regarding condo legislation. We know that for the users of condos, the

purchasers of condos, in many cases this is the largest investment that an individual makes. It is incumbent upon us, as legislators, to look carefully at the details and at the kinds of abuses that we've seen in different parts of the province where people have misunderstood, have not accepted their responsibility, or they have made things so difficult for people to understand and so complex.

One of the cases that comes to my mind is that no piece of paper goes from one person to another without it coming from a lawyer. Now, that gives you a sense of how difficult and, frankly, ridiculous it is for people who want to buy their home, and now they are in the position where nothing can go between the members of the board except by a lawyer's letter. That gives you some idea of how important it is for us to take the time to debate this bill this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the people I represent in London West to speak for a couple of minutes to the comments that were offered by the member from York-Simcoe. The member from York-Simcoe expressed a concern that we have repeated over and over during this debate, and that is about whether this new legislation, the Protecting Condominium Owners Act, will actually protect condominium owners.

She pointed out the lack of representation on the expert panel that came up with this legislation, the lack of representation for people who actually own condos. There was only one representative of owners on that expert panel; the rest of the members of the expert panel came from the development industry, from consultants, from lawyers, from all of the people who are going to profit from the administration and management of condominiums.

We have all heard over and over again from constituents who have invested significant dollars into purchasing a condo. Often, these are very young people who are making their first purchases. They don't have a lot of money but they are making this investment, and currently there is no place for them to go if they get into a dispute with the condo board, with the developer or with the manager. Certainly, what's in this legislation will deal with disputes between condo owners and boards but it will not deal with some of the most significant and egregious disputes that arise between condo owners and the developers and the managers of those condominium units.

We're pleased to see this finally coming forward, but we remain concerned about what it will do to actually protect condo owners.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Point of order?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I just wanted to take this opportunity to correct my record. This morning during question period, I meant to say that our government spent \$3.15 million on the healthy children strategy for six aboriginal communities across Ontario. I said \$3.5 mil-

lion; the actual amount is \$3.15 million. I just wanted to correct the record.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Members are allowed to correct their record at any time.

Questions and comments?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for York-Simcoe. I listened carefully to her comments. She is one of the most respected members here. I think members on all sides of the House like this member and enjoy her company. She has been here for a long time and is very experienced, so I appreciate her comments.

I have had an opportunity to speak at length to this bill myself, as well. At the same time, I think we've all had ample opportunity as parties to express our views on this, and I can't imagine—it appears that we're hearing lots of duplication in comments from the members opposite.

This is one of those bills that has had so much consultation. It's been before this House more than once. I really think that all of those folks that contributed so much outside of this Legislature, all of those condo dwellers and their representatives who were so excited to move forward for the first time since 1998 with these reviews—I would think if they're watching these proceedings, they're wondering why we're not getting on with this, why we're not moving this to committee and actually getting something done here.

1730

There's no question, Mr. Speaker, that after 50 members have had an opportunity to speak, after seven hours of debate and the fact that we've extended this debate for six and a half hours now, I really think that the folks outside of this place are starting to lose their patience. They want us to get on with this good reform, because we all seem to be in agreement. If there are more specifics that we want to get on with, we can deal with that, when the time comes, with amendments in committee, if necessary, to make sure this is the strongest legislation possible.

I encourage the members opposite to show a little respect for the members outside of the Legislature who have worked so hard on this. Let's get on with this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm pleased that I am able to speak to this, because there are points I need to represent on behalf of my constituents. They are outside of this Legislature, but they sent me here to Queen's Park to make sure that I bring my thoughts here on their behalf.

I want to echo the minister's comments about my colleague from York-Simcoe: She is certainly one of the most-liked and well-respected members here, and I certainly listened intently to all of her comments. I hope everyone enjoyed what she shared with this Legislature and those people listening from home.

I'm going to speak to this later, Mr. Speaker, in more detail, but one of the things that I do want to bring in—and it might be a little bit of a different take on some of the things—is that I am actually a condo owner back in

my home area, and I'm actually the president of our condo association. One of the things that I have concerns about and I'm going to bring to this Legislature to ensure that we're doing good legislation is that not all sizes fit all things. I'm from a very rural area—a small 55-unit. It is an elected board for governance. We have challenges now getting people to step up to even become a board member, let alone putting compulsory management in that would have to, then, increase fees. Many of the people living in our units are elderly; many of them are widowed; and they're barely hanging on now. If we put compulsory management and the fees to keep that person educated, that would be yet another tax on the system.

I think we have to be very diligent. I think there are very good things that are going to happen in this legislation. It's good, after 17 years, to review, but the big skyscrapers here in the urban areas of Toronto are much different than a 55-unit, such as it is in rural Ontario—those costs to contain and maintain that, and just the onerous responsibility.

I do think there are good things from governance. A good colleague of mine down here has a special assessment that was put in for \$1,000 for the next 18 months. That's unacceptable, Mr. Speaker. If you have good governance and people who are paying attention—you are audited, you do an AGM, so people should understand what's going on and should have good management. I'm one of those people who takes it very seriously. I don't think you're going to send me to management school and it's going to make that much difference.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now turn to the member from Welland.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you to the member from York-Simcoe for your comments.

The member from Timmins-James Bay, when he was speaking a few moments ago, raised the issue of affordable housing and how that intertwines with this condo piece. I know that when I was the municipal affairs critic, this issue was raised to me a number of times by people who were renting in condos here across Toronto—and it's around the whole condo fee piece, right? You move into a condo as an owner—it affects owners as well as renters. You buy a condo and you're told your condo fees are going to be \$300. You rent your unit out, but then after that first annual meeting your condo fees suddenly go to \$700, because you're required to submit a certain amount of money into the reserve fund for the future. So now you're raising your tenant's rent by \$400, \$500 or \$600 so you can break even in renting out your asset. So the owner is impacted and the tenant is impacted in that case. I don't know how this bill is actually going to address that kind of situation.

The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound raised the issue of not-one-size-fits-all, and it's absolutely true. In my own condo as well, we have difficulty having people step up to the plate to actually run on the condo board. The condo fees are such that we couldn't support full-time management, nor could we even support a full-

time superintendent for the building. So I think that we need to be looking at not just 40-storey buildings here in Toronto, but we need to be looking at what we can do to address problems in smaller condo buildings across the province as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for York-Simcoe.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Thank you very much. I would like to say a special thanks to the member from London West, the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Innovation, and the members for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and Welland.

When I take the accumulation of the comments made by those people, one of the things that comes across is that people are forgetting why somebody particularly wants a condo and why they choose that form of home ownership. It's more obvious in rural or outside metropolitan areas than it is in downtown Toronto, and that is because the ones that I know of in my riding are often the home choice of seniors. They look at this as an opportunity where somebody else mows the lawn and shovels the snow. That's fine, and that's sort of their vision of what they're going to get and what they're going to pay for. They're comfortable with that.

Too often, it morphs into something much harder for them to manage financially. They're on fixed incomes. They look at the purchase as kind of the big part of it, and then all of a sudden it sort of creeps in that the big part has now become the condo fee. Members have raised issues of people or condo buildings where there's no possible way they could afford a full-time paid manager or supervisor or even a combination.

I think it's really important to keep that vision in mind, that on the one side of the concern is the 42-storey building but on the other side is the two-storey building in small-town Ontario. Those people deserve our attention.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm very pleased to have this opportunity this afternoon to speak to Bill 106, An Act to amend the Condominium Act, 1998, to enact the Condominium Management Services Act, 2015 and to amend other Acts with respect to condominiums.

I wasn't sure I was going to have this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, because, as you know, a couple of the government members have been alluding to the fact that this debate has gone on for a considerable period of time, in their view, and that everything has been said. The government is not currently putting up speakers, so I gather their members, the ones who are present, don't wish to participate further in this debate. At the same time, we have members on this side who want to participate and want to have a chance to speak, so we're going to continue this debate on this Thursday afternoon.

Of course, as you know, Mr. Speaker, a number of our caucus colleagues have spoken to the bill, and our caucus position quite simply is this: We know that home ownership is one of the best investments a family can

make and that families need to know that they will be protected once they have made this substantial financial commitment. We also know that more and more families are choosing a condominium as their preferred housing option. Condominium development in the province is continuing to grow, certainly in Toronto but in many of our smaller cities as well, and, indeed, in our small towns across the province.

This bill, Bill 106, provides many important new consumer and financial protection measures. That is certainly the contention of the government. In fact, on this side of the House we agree with that statement, but we have this concern that we've expressed and we will continue to express during the course of this debate and, indeed, if the bill passes and goes to committee. We are concerned about the increased red tape and bureaucracy contained in this bill. There will be two new administrative authorities created, which will require a large amount of capital for start-up. Of course, as government grows, as bureaucracy grows, we continue to see upward pressure on taxes, higher deficits and higher debt, which is what this government is known for. So we would add that concern obviously and encourage the government to try to find ways to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy in a general sense.

1740

Bill 106 affects a number of acts. It opens up the Condominium Act, the Land Titles Act, the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act, the Licence Appeal Tribunal Act, and the Condominium Management Services Act as being enacted as a result of this bill, if, indeed, it is passed.

The bill is intended to allow for the establishment of a condominium authority that would be responsible for administering condo owner education, dispute resolution and a condo corporation registry. The condo authority would be a not-for-profit corporation under the oversight of the Auditor General, and after initial start-up funding from the government it would be financed solely by a fee charged to condo corporations. It is estimated the fee passed down to owners would be about \$1 per month. The condo authority would, of course, have the responsibility to administer the Condominium Authority Tribunal, which would resolve disputes through case management, mediation and adjudication. Presumably this would mean some disputes that might be currently going before the courts would in turn be discussed and adjudicated through this new tribunal.

The bill would create a separate licensing authority to administer licensing of condo managers. This would be done through a proposed new Condominium Management Services Act, which would create, if passed, a compulsory licensing system for managers and management firms, creating a training and education program for managers, and establish a code of ethics for condo managers. The act would also set specific qualifications for someone to be a licensed manager.

The bill would amend the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act so that most of the warranty protections

available to buyers of new condos would also apply to certain condo conversion projects, and this, to me, makes sense, Mr. Speaker.

The bill aims to strengthen financial management by providing condo owners with more information about financial matters affecting their investment and more control over changes.

The bill aims to improve how condos are run by requiring the boards to provide regular information updates to owners, and updating requirement for board meetings. I think, certainly, that is probably in the public interest, to ensure there are standards set for informing condominium owners what's going on, and, obviously, that is something that we would want to see happen.

Mr. Speaker, I know that this has come up in the debate but I want to reiterate a few important points. The most recent condo legislation in the province of Ontario, to the best of my knowledge, passed in 1998. Of course, now in 2015, 17 years have passed; obviously we have to look at legislation from time to time to ensure that it is up to date and it is meeting the current needs of the people of Ontario. It is time to review this issue.

Today, 1.3 million Ontarians live in condos and more than 50% of new homes being built in Ontario today are condominium developments. So, again, that illustrates the size of the condo sector, and also the growing importance of the condo sector and the necessity, I think, of provincial legislation to keep up with that reality and ensure that condominium owners are given adequate consumer protection. There are currently 700,000 condo units in Ontario, with another 51,000 units under construction; that's up from 270,000 units in 2001. So, again, this illustrates the growing importance of condominium developments as a housing option, and the take-up by Ontario families.

In 2012, the government began reviewing the Condominium Act, and there was a three-stage public engagement process aimed at modernizing the legislation. This was in response to growing concerns from condo owners and managers, and I'm told that the key issues identified during the course of this review included governance, dispute resolution, financial management, consumer protection and condominium manager qualifications.

There are two issues that I want to add to this debate. Actually, I had previously brought them up, in the course of the debate and as part of a two-minute response, I believe it was last Thursday, Mr. Speaker, and I am still awaiting a response from the government. The first issue is a condominium in the community of Fergus, in the township of Centre Wellington. It is called the Fergus mill condominium. It is at 478 St. Andrew Street East in Fergus. The owners' association has contacted me on numerous occasions to express concerns about the need for provincial regulation for the inspection and maintenance of turbines where they exist in residential buildings. In this case, there is an electricity-generating turbine in the Grand River that is actually physically in this condominium building, this redeveloped old mill building that's actually very, very beautiful. But the residents are

concerned about the vibration from this turbine and what impact it might have on the safety of the residents, and also the structural integrity of the building, due to the constant vibration and noise from the turbine.

I've made numerous inquiries with the government, with the Premier and with various ministers, asking whether or not there is any regulation of this sort of thing. We've determined, after numerous responses, that the provincial government does not regulate this sort of activity. I can only surmise that there are very few examples where there is an electricity-generating turbine in a river that's also associated and attached to a condominium building like this. I've suggested that this might be something that the Technical Standards and Safety Authority might be most appropriately involved with to regulate, and I still await a response from the government.

I wrote the Premier, actually, on Tuesday of this week; also the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. I draw this issue to the attention of the minister who has introduced this bill for consideration and urge her to look into it as well, to see what can be done to assist these condominium owners.

Secondly, there's an issue, again of long standing, that I've raised in the House now and also in many, many communications with the government and many letters that I've written, drawing attention to the need for traffic signals near the Sands Condominium in Georgetown, in the town of Halton Hills, at the intersection of Guelph Street/Highway 7 and McFarlane Drive/Hall Road. I've worked with the town of Halton Hills's mayor, Rick Bonnette, and some of the councillors who have expressed concerns, as well as some of the representatives of the condominium board who are very, very concerned about safety as they're leaving their building and turning left or right on Guelph Street, which is also Highway 7 through Georgetown.

These constituents of mine believe that there needs to be full traffic signals at this intersection. I'm supporting them. I'm disappointed that the ministry has initially indicated an unwillingness to recognize the important safety issue here, but we are persistent in Wellington-Halton Hills and we're going to continue raising this issue. Again, I would ask the Minister of Transportation to take a look at the unique needs here at this intersection and also the reality that there's going to be significant new development in the area which will create additional traffic. Again, a safety issue exists.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to respond, on behalf of the people I represent in London West, to the remarks that were given to us by the member for Wellington-Halton Hills.

You know, Speaker, I know we all agree that protection for condo owners is important. I have heard a lot of support for seeing this bill move forward.

When we reflect on who these condo owners are in our province, we look at what we know. What we know

is that 71% of all condo owners are one-person households and couples without children. Of these, women make up two thirds—fully two thirds—of condo owners who live alone. Three quarters of those are aged 55 or older and living alone.

There is another much smaller segment of condo owners that are lone-parent families. Of those, 84%, or four out of five, of those lone-parent families are headed by women. So women are disproportionately affected by this legislation because they are over-represented among condo owners.

One of our concerns is that this legislation does not provide a dispute resolution mechanism when there are disputes with developers, which means that the only recourse is to go to court to seek some kind of legal redress. We know that going to court can be extremely expensive. It can be an extremely lengthy and extremely costly process that can take years for a dispute to be resolved.

When the only recourse that we're leaving for women who often have much fewer resources, particularly lone-family women, is lawsuits, we are not protecting condo owners at all.

1750

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm pleased to add my comments to Bill 106 and also to respond to what the member from Wellington-Halton Hills had to say about this bill.

It is certainly, I agree, one of the most important decisions that a person can make in their life: to purchase a home, to purchase a condo. We know that at one time they used to be far and few between, and that right now, as the member rightly pointed out, over 50% of the new homes that are built in Ontario are condos.

Even in the riding that I have the privilege to represent, York South-Weston—which is in Toronto but not downtown Toronto; it's in the northwest part of the city—condos are very common. Who are the condo owners? They're seniors, but they're also single families of all backgrounds, from all walks of life. We have small condos and we have big high-rise condominiums as well.

The need for the government to move forward with new legislation has been felt for a long time. I'm very pleased that we have taken the time to do extensive consultations. At every stage—in phase 1 and phase 2—I took the time as an MPP to conduct local consultation and consulted my residents on what issues they felt were important so that I could pass them on to the ministry. We did that as a community.

In regard to the red tape that the member from Wellington-Halton Hills was talking about, I want to say that the new condominium authority that will be formed will have oversight and provide a quicker, lower-cost dispute resolution than what is available today. That is the whole point: to give people the chance to do that in a quicker and less costly way.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's always a pleasure to bring comments to my colleague from Wellington-Halton Hills, who always brings a balanced viewpoint to any issue in this House.

Mr. Speaker, I'm probably going to be cut short in my 10 minutes, so I'm going to try to get it all in now. I'm relatively supportive. It's great to see a 17-year review of this. I support in principle the concept of the education and the intent.

But I do have some concerns. That's why I want to address them and make sure, if it gets to committee, that these are amendments that they will accept. They need to appreciate the size and complexity; one size doesn't fit all. We need the ability to balance the realistic and pragmatic reality of being able to comply with all the factions of the bill. I'm worried about a bureaucracy being created when I see words like "mandatory and compulsory licensing system."

Many people in the condo that I'm a member of are seniors living on a very fixed income, so some of these things, again, are going to have very onerous responsibilities. We don't get a lot of people lining up at the AGM to become members of the board of directors. If we put too much stringency in it, a lot of people are going to back away. We don't have the ability to afford full-time managers. We don't have the ability to address some of these things at the most high level that someone in a very urban area certainly could do.

The compulsory licensing system, again, definitely is a concern, and I've raised this personally with the minister. Something in downtown Toronto doesn't always work in rural Ontario or, more importantly, northern Ontario. We have to make sure that, again, it's not too onerous.

I ask questions: What's the onerous potential to put on members? What's the ability to maintain this? What's the time? What's the cost? Communication: It's suggested that it requires boards to provide regular information updates. Any good board of management is going to do that on a regular basis. We certainly do a newsletter, and anything we're going to do from an action perspective we communicate back out. You have an AGM; you have auditors who come in.

I do have concerns that there needs to be better and smarter disclosure. As I mentioned earlier, one of my colleagues has a special assessment of \$1,000 a month for 18 months. That should have been disclosed. But at the end of the day, we need to just make sure that we do this with balance and the ability for people to actually do

the job, Mr. Speaker—not make us compulsory managers. Those things are going to be too onerous.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: We're getting to the final six minutes of this debate. There certainly have been a lot of good comments made, particularly from the opposition side, I may add, about how we can't look at this just in the eye of Toronto or the greater Toronto area. We really have to look at this as it goes across the province, because more and more condos are being built in smaller communities, in tourist areas across the province, and we want to ensure that consumers have the protection that they actually need. So many developers and builders have promised consumers many things, just like consumers are promised at the door in gas contracts or furnace sales or water heater sales. Many condominium purchasers use their life savings to actually buy this last home they're going to have in this life, and we need to make sure that we do this right.

I know that we'll certainly be bringing forward a number of amendments, amendments around addressing some of the issues that I and others talked about today with Taron, about issues that we talked about with developers. I know from my own experience of having gone into the showroom and having been sold a bill of goods, only to find out, when the condo was finished, that in fact what I was promised I didn't get—unless you're prepared to go to litigation, and if it is not impacted by a violation of the building code, you're out of luck, unless you want to spend a bunch of dollars paying lawyers to actually get remedies to those situations.

As the bill moves forward through committee, I'm sure that many of us will have amendments, and we hope that the government supports those amendments to make sure that this is right for Ontarians.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Wellington-Halton Hills. You have two minutes.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Seeing the time, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the members for London West and York South-Weston, the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and the member for Welland for responding to my comments. We all look forward to further debate on Bill 106.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1757.

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Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
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Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
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McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
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Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
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Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB) Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Halton Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
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Wong, Soo (LIB) Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC) Yurek, Jeff (PC) Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB) Vacant	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke Elgin–Middlesex–London Willowdale Whitby–Oshawa	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Jagmeet Singh, Peter Tabuns
Glenn Thibeault
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

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Comité spécial de la violence et du harcèlement à caractère
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Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
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Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 41st Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 41^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Monday 28 September 2015

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Lundi 28 septembre 2015

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 28 September 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 28 septembre 2015

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Today in the House we have the honour of welcoming a former member, Mr. Gary Fox from Prince Edward–Hastings during the 36th Parliament. Please join me in welcoming him back to Queen's Park.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We could be talking about the ghost of Gary Fox, but that was my message to you that I'm planning to get in front of you before you step on my—anyway, introduction of guests.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to introduce Krista Klages and Bryce Klages, mom and dad of page captain Eastyn Klages, from the great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have four friends to introduce this morning. The mayor of Sarnia, Mike Bradley, is with us today, and Whitby councillor Chris Leahy, Brantford councillor Brian Van Tilborg and Katrina Miller from the Keep Hydro Public campaign. Welcome to Queen's Park and question period this morning.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I'd like to introduce the families of two page captains today. Kelly Hu, from the great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham—her mother, Feng Shao, is in the members' gallery this morning, and also page captain Siena Pacheco has her mother, Rosmarie; her father, Luis; her sister Alexia; and grandmother Anna Belli all with us this morning.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to welcome Harry Dearden to Queen's Park today from Cambridge. Harry, welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have some visitors from back home. My son Michael with his wife, Sabrina, and three children—Kaitlin, Anika and Maddox—are coming to Queen's Park. We'd better behave.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to welcome all of the members of the Canadian Association of Physician Assistants visiting Queen's Park today. I invite you to join me, along with all other members, for Physician Assistants Awareness Day in room 230 from 12 noon to 3 o'clock to learn more about the positive impact that our physician assistants are having on patients in Ontario.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to welcome members of the Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition—they're

here today lobbying, fighting the good fight for agriculture—with special mention to Matt Bowman, who comes from the great riding of Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the member from Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I wanted to take this opportunity to congratulate my colleague the Minister of Community Safety and the government House leader for running 89 kilometres this weekend in support of those wonderful police officers we have had across Ontario who passed away. Congratulations. I'm very proud of you.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I believe the students and the teachers from Branksome Hall are here today. I recognize the Hunting Stewart tartan. Welcome.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: The Minister of Health mentioned that the physician assistants are here today. There is one from my area, Stephanie Ruttinger.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions?

Although already introduced, I would be remiss if I did not introduce Mr. Brian Van Tilborg, a city councillor in Brantford. Thank you, Brian, for being here, and welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is to the Premier. Criminal charges have now be laid against one of the Premier's most senior operatives, Gerry Loughheed Jr. The OPP investigations against the apparent contraventions of the Election Act by the Premier's deputy chief of staff and Gerry Loughheed remain open and ongoing.

Now that charges have been laid, will the Premier set the record straight? Did the Premier instruct either Pat Sorbara or Gerry Loughheed Jr. to offer Andrew Olivier a job or an appointment in exchange for staying out of the Sudbury by-election?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the Leader of the Opposition knows, we're aware of the charges that have been laid against Mr. Loughheed. The police have informed Pat Sorbara's counsel that she will not face any criminal charges. That is also public knowledge now.

I've been open with the Legislature, I've been open with the media, and I've been open with the public about these allegations. We have faith in the process. We have co-operated—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am going to seek order immediately. The member from Renfrew, come to order.

Please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We have co-operated fully with the process, Mr. Speaker, and we'll continue to do so. This matter is now before the courts and I will not be commenting on the situation in Sudbury.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: Just because Pat Sorbara will not face criminal charges, it doesn't mean that she won't be charged under the Election Act.

In a media interview in mid-December, Gerry Lougheed Jr. confirmed that he spoke with the Premier before he spoke with Andrew Olivier. On the tapes, Mr. Lougheed says, "I come to you on behalf of the Premier." On the tapes, Pat Sorbara says, "You've been directly asked by the leader and the Premier to make a decision to step aside to allow Glenn to have the opportunity uncontested...."

In the eyes of the hard-working people of Ontario, Pat Sorbara's actions are no different than Gerry Lougheed's; in fact, they may be worse. Will the Premier tell the people of Ontario what she instructed Lougheed and Sorbara to say and to offer to Andrew Olivier?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

1040

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I would just remind the Leader of the Opposition that there are no criminal charges that are going to be laid against Pat Sorbara. That is public knowledge.

As far as I know, in terms of the Elections Ontario investigation, it is ongoing. We have no knowledge to the converse of that, and we'll continue to co-operate with that independent investigation. But in terms of the other questions about the Sudbury by-election, those matters are before the court.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: The Premier is going to have to tell the truth at some point. There's a possibility that this Premier—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to ask the leader to withdraw and to be very cautious of how—things that we can't say directly, we're not going to say indirectly.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

To the Premier: The Premier is going to have to be transparent at some point. There is a possibility that this Premier will be subpoenaed to testify. There is a possibility that the deputy chief of staff will be subpoenaed to testify.

The Premier's office must be held to the highest standard. How can the Premier, in good conscience, continue

to evade answering these questions when there are serious criminal allegations of corruption that go to the heart of the highest levels of her office?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I have answered questions in this House; I have answered questions with the media. I have been very clear in terms of my involvement in what happened.

There are no criminal charges being laid against my staff person, Pat Sorbara. There is an ongoing investigation in terms of Elections Ontario. But I would say to the Leader of the Opposition that at every juncture, I have co-operated. I have worked with the investigation. I will continue to do so.

I have answered those questions, Mr. Speaker. Now there are issues that are before a court, and I won't comment on—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds—Grenville, come to order.

New question.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is to the Premier. When the Liberal government couldn't negotiate a contract with the doctors, they slashed their fees paid to physicians in retaliation. The Liberals have cut \$580 million from physician services as a punishment for not agreeing to the government's deal.

What does this government not understand? This is a cut to patients. They aren't just punishing doctors; the government is punishing patients in Ontario. The people of Ontario are going to be hurt. The people who are going to be hurt are stroke patients, young families, the elderly—all those in need of Ontario's medical help and care.

Mr. Speaker, why is the Premier being so short-sighted? Why does she continue to slash health care funding for front-line health care workers?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Leader of the Opposition is talking about a negotiation. We have a deep respect and admiration for the doctors of this province. We know how critical they are.

I grew up in the family of a general practitioner. My dad has worked—he's not working now; he's going to be 90 years old next year. But he practised in this province, and I know how critical primary care physicians are. It's why we've hired thousands more doctors. There are thousands more doctors in this province than there were when we came into office in 2003.

Unfortunately, the Ontario Medical Association rejected the offer that was on the table. A third party, Justice Winkler, came in, looked at the offer and recommended that the OMA accept the offer. They chose not to, so we had to go forward and implement the offer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: Rather than blaming hard-working doctors, let's talk about the facts. The \$580-million cut to health care is threatening access to quality and patient-focused care. With 800,000 Ontarians already without a doctor and 140,000 new patients each year in Ontario, these cuts will make it even harder for people to get the care they need: cuts that will lead to the closure of many walk-in clinics, clinics that are visited each day by the very people who don't have a family doctor. That means those patients will have no choice but to go to emerg, and that means longer wait times at emerg.

The damage from these cuts is being felt in communities large and small. Will the Premier get her priorities straight and stop this assault on front-line health care in Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Be seated, please.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is just raring to answer the supplementary, Mr. Speaker, but let me just be clear. Despite the fact that this member was in the federal government at the time when Stephen Harper slashed the Canada Health Transfer—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Come to order. Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Start the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean–Carleton will come to order, and the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will come to order.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Despite the fact that that cut will mean \$8 billion less to Ontario over 10 years, we have consistently increased health care funding. Doctors' salaries and doctors' compensation in Ontario have gone up 60% under our watch. The average doctor in Ontario bills about \$350,000. They're among the best paid in the country.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, according to the Premier's own budget, the federal government transferred—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Trinity–Spadina, come to order.

Carry on.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, according to the Premier's own budget, the federal transfers increased by \$652 million, but you only spent \$598 million, so you've cut \$54 million from the health care budget in Ontario. Years of cutting funding to doctors: Two years ago it was

\$850 million, then it was a \$580-million cut earlier this year, and now another \$235-million cut.

This has real results in Ontario's health care delivery. This means the closure of at least six addiction centres just in Toronto alone. It means longer wait times at ERs, family doctors' offices and clinics. It means 140,000 people struggling to find a family doctor.

My question, Mr. Speaker, is, that maybe instead of \$5 million in bonuses to Pan Am execs, \$24 million in salaries and benefits for—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know that the member opposite, the leader of the official opposition, wasn't here under the Mike Harris government when that government slashed health care, closed hospitals and fired thousands of nurses across this province.

It's true that when we came into government in 2003, we inherited a system that was disrespectful of our doctors. Doctors were leaving the province. Doctors weren't adequately compensated. We've corrected that.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Finish, please.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We appreciate the work that our doctors do across this province. We increased their compensation from government by 61% over the last decade to the point where they're among the best paid in Canada, if not in North America, as they should be, and that's going to continue. The cost of our budget as well is increasing by 1.25% each year. It will continue to increase to represent our doctors well.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Last January, at the beginning of her efforts to hide her role and the role of her office in the Sudbury bribery scandal, the Premier issued a statement saying that Mr. Lougheed "is not government or Liberal Party staff. He speaks for himself." But Mr. Lougheed certainly seemed to think that he was speaking for the Premier, and it's a bit rich for the Premier to distance herself from a well-known senior Liberal bagman who has raised a lot of money for her campaigns and has raised a lot of money for Mr. Trudeau's campaign.

Does the Premier still stand by her statement that Mr. Lougheed wasn't speaking for her or anyone in her office?

1050

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I will repeat what I said earlier, Mr. Speaker. Of course we're aware of the charges that have been laid against Mr. Lougheed. There are no criminal charges that have been laid against my staff person, Pat Sorbara. There is now a case before the courts, and I'm not going to comment further on that.

The leader of the third party knows that I have answered questions in the Legislature; I have answered questions of the media; I've been very clear about the incidents around the Sudbury by-election. But I'm not going to litigate a case that is now in front of the courts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier has refused to take any responsibility in the Sudbury bribery scandal. But while the Premier is trying to act like she barely even knew Gerry Lougheed, the transcripts say in black and white that Mr. Lougheed was acting "on behalf of the Premier...."

My question to the Premier is this: Did the Premier order the call, and was Mr. Lougheed, in fact, speaking on behalf of the Premier as he claimed?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, these are issues that are going to be dealt with in a court. I'm not going to comment any further on them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Premier can try to dodge responsibility for this mess, but something simply is not adding up. If the Premier has nothing to hide, she should just say so.

The transcript says very clearly, "They would like to present you options in terms of appointments, jobs, whatever...." On the recording, it certainly seems that "they" are the Premier and Ms. Sorbara. Who ordered the call? Was it the Premier, was it Ms. Sorbara or was it someone else in the Premier's office?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I think the leader of the third party should maybe look to her deputy leader, who is also a lawyer, and maybe get some legal advice. That advice should be along the lines that she should not be soliciting anybody in this House to interfere in a judicial proceeding. I think that's a well-known fact. You don't need to have a law degree to understand that we do not interfere in any kind of investigation or judicial proceeding. It would be highly inappropriate, Speaker.

All these questions that the member opposite is asking are inappropriate. I would suggest to her, respectfully, that she should not be soliciting anybody in this House to interfere in a judicial proceeding.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. This is a Premier who loves to talk about having conversations, and it's clear from the transcripts of the recorded telephone calls that the Premier, Ms. Sorbara, the member for Sudbury and Mr. Lougheed were all

having lots of conversations behind the scenes. There is good reason to believe that every single one of these four people know who it was who ordered Mr. Lougheed to make the call.

Will this Premier show some leadership, Speaker, and allow the people in her office and in her caucus to come forward with what they know about the order to have Mr. Olivier accept a bribe?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Speaker, there is a process that has unfolded and is unfolding outside this Legislature. I have co-operated with that process; I will continue to do so.

But the fact is that this is not the court. This is not the court where the decisions are going to be made. That process is not in this room, Mr. Speaker. It is happening outside of the Legislature. We will continue to co-operate, Mr. Speaker, as we have done all along.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Premier of the province of Ontario shouldn't have to be sworn in by a judge to be up front with the people of Ontario. She has been tying herself in knots to protect herself and Liberal insiders while she keeps the truth from Ontarians. The Premier, Ms. Sorbara, the member for Sudbury and Mr. Lougheed are all in this up to their necks, Speaker.

Does this Premier actually expect Ontarians to believe that no one in her office or her caucus knew about the calls to offer Mr. Olivier a bribe to step aside?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, once again there is a reason why we keep our judicial system separate from our political system. The reason is exactly this: We do not try cases in the Legislature. What the leader of the third party is doing is trying to inject politics into a manner that is before the courts. I think the prudent advice to her would be that she should refrain from doing so. She is not a judge; she is not the trier of fact. As far as I know, she's not a litigator in this case either. All those steps will take place in front of a judge. It's not a matter of getting sworn before a judge or not. That is how the system works, and it works like this for a reason—for centuries—it is the right system.

Let's not mix politics with the judicial proceeding. Let's respect the process. The Premier has co-operated on this matter from day one.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It seems that no matter how badly you behave, if you're a Liberal, you have to be dragged away in cuffs before you're held accountable in this province. This Premier needs to actually step up and show some responsibility. Someone is not coming clean.

No one believes that the Premier, that her deputy chief of staff and that the member for Sudbury absolutely knew nothing. If the Premier and her staff had nothing to do with this, she should simply say so. She's the one that promised over and over again that she was going to do things differently this time around for the Liberals. It

seems like the same old same old is happening in this chamber.

Why won't the Premier be up front and honest with Ontarians and tell this House who ordered that call?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The Premier has been honest and up front with the people of Ontario. She remains—she has been open on this matter. She has co-operated—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The Premier has co-operated on this matter from day one, but we are not going to break rules by interfering in a judicial proceeding. I think the leader of the third party should also refrain from doing so. We are not going to comment any further on this matter.

The Premier and this government will remain focused on the mandate that the people of Ontario have given to us. We will continue to focus on building Ontario up. We are going to continue to focus on investing in the skills and talents of Ontarians. We are going to continue to focus on building infrastructure, which is much needed across this province.

HOME CARE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Last week, the Auditor General released a scathing report detailing the CCACs' failing of our most vulnerable citizens. The CCACs' failing of the people of Ontario means that this Liberal government has failed the people of Ontario. The Liberals failed when they allowed 40% of funding to go directly to bureaucracy, which is quite unheard of. Every member in this House must have heard a horror story of a patient being denied the CCAC service they deserved.

Why did the minister ignore the cries of those patients in need? Where was the accountability in this government to ensure cost-effective care?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question. I think the member knows that I spoke to the Auditor General's report last year. I endorsed her report. I accepted it—

Interjection: Last week.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Sorry, last week. I accepted her report. I accepted all of her recommendations, and I indicated that I plan, as the minister, to implement all of the recommendations in her report. But I also mentioned that, since earlier this year, we've been very engaged. In fact, the government had asked some time ago for Gail Donner and an expert panel to look at home care for us. She presented her report in January of this year. Since then, we've accepted and implemented all of her recommendations as well.

We have a 10-point action plan that reflects her recommendations. We're going to be working with both reports, implementing both reports in their entirety.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the minister: Minister, far too long this Wynne Liberal government has ignored

all those people who were turned away or moved down the wait-list at the CCACs. For five years, this ministry failed to conduct an analysis to show whether service providers could better deliver direct programs. This Liberal government allowed costs to skyrocket without considering the damage to our health care system. It's time for action, not for studies or high-priced consultants. It's time for accountability.

Minister, the Auditor General's report clearly shows that you're incapable of controlling the bureaucracy in the health care system. Are you not up to the job?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The member opposite knows, because he has a background in the health sector—and I appreciate that and enjoy the fact that he will be an effective critic for that and I'm sure for other reasons. But I want to say that we have world-class health providers that are working in our CCACs and with the contracted agencies, providing support to people, roughly 800,000 Ontarians year-round. But I want to point out that the party opposite did vote against our \$250-million increase annually for our CCACs, for home and community care, going forward in the next three years.

1100

We're investing \$2.5 billion in our CCACs. We're implementing. We're not having another study; we're not doing another review. We have two good road maps that we're following, with recommendations from the Auditor General and with recommendations from Gail Donner and her expert panel. We're implementing her recommendations to make sure that we're providing the best possible care.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: A question to the Premier: The Premier says that she has an election mandate from the people to sell off Ontario's oldest and most important public asset, but Ontarians aren't buying it. They don't like being duped. At least 165 Ontario municipalities have passed resolutions since the election opposing the Premier's sale of Hydro One, and over the weekend a national columnist wrote, "Her decision to privatize Hydro One is a reminder of how flexible—some might say duplicitous—Liberals can be once they gain power."

Will the Premier stop her duplicity, listen to Ontarians and reverse her reckless, short-sighted plan to sell Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I appreciate the question from the critic from the third party. They have been criss-crossing the province, meeting with people and flaming them on so-called skyrocketing hydro prices because of broadening ownership.

Just last week, the Supreme Court of Canada—not a journalist in any newspaper; the Supreme Court of Canada—upheld the right of the Ontario Energy Board to ensure consumers pay just and reasonable rates for electricity or any other utility, on expenditures like collective bargaining labour agreements.

In a decision Friday, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled on the long-standing dispute that began after the energy board determined Ontario Power Generation's labour costs were too high and disallowed the full payment amount requested.

The Supreme Court of Canada says, "The OEB's mandate is to review the underlying cost structure and make sure the costs that OPG seeks to pass off to customers [through] rates are just and reasonable." This applies—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, again to the Premier: These 165 municipalities need money for infrastructure. They also know that Hydro One makes money for Ontario. The Hydro One prospectus tells investors to expect cash dividends of \$500 million per year. They know that a privatized Hydro One will drive up electricity rates and make it harder to deliver essential municipal services. They know this is a bad deal.

Will the Premier stop ignoring these 165 municipalities and keep Hydro One public?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member wants to ignore a ruling from Supreme Court of Canada, which says that the OEB does have the power and is in fact reducing rates when required to be reduced. Not only with electricity companies: The Ontario Energy Board, just last week, again—a lot of fast-moving news here. The OEB approved decreases in natural gas rates for Enbridge and Union Gas customers.

The OEB is functioning. It's responsible, it's one of the best regulatory agencies in North America, and it will control, modify and hold Hydro One to account on rates.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Vic Dhillon: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. As the member for Brampton West, I know that transit is extremely important to those living in my community. Many of my constituents rely on GO Transit to get to and from work every day, and they tell me that they want to see our government making investments in transit and transportation that truly count.

As part of budget 2015, our government announced improvements to the GO rail network as part of our regional express rail plan. Can the minister please tell members of this House what kind of service improvements Ontarians can expect under this plan?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to begin by thanking the member from Brampton West, not only for his advocacy and the question today, but for continuing to be a great champion for all of Brampton.

As announced in budget 2015 and as the member mentioned, our government is making the single largest infrastructure investment in this province's history. We are investing \$13.5 billion to improve the entire GO Transit network as part of our regional express rail plan. As part of that plan, we'll be giving those living in the GTHA new travel options with faster and more frequent service, and electrification on core segments of the GO

rail network. Specifically, that means that these investments will more than double peak service and quadruple off-peak service compared to today, reduce journey times for some cross-region transit trips by as much as 50%, and give a much wider range of travel options for those living in and around the GTHA.

Progress is already being made, but our government will continue to work with Metrolinx to deliver on this important plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I want to thank the minister for his response. As the minister noted, our government is making the single largest infrastructure investment in Ontario's history, and I know that those living in my community will be pleased to hear that they will be seeing service improvements as part of our regional express rail plan. But I also know that those living in my community do not want to wait 10 years to see these improvements.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please tell members of this House if those living in Brampton can expect to see increased service sooner than 10 years from now?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to thank the member again for the follow-up question. We expect that over the next 10 years, weekly trips across the entire GO rail network will grow from the current 1,500 to nearly 6,000. Importantly, we're not waiting 10 years to deliver important results. Earlier this month, I was happy to announce that we have already added 14 new train trips on the Kitchener line between Mount Pleasant GO station and Union Station. This is an investment that will directly help those living in the community of Brampton along this particular line.

It's further proof that our government's commitment to making daily commutes and quality of life better for Ontarians is happening, whether they live in York region or, frankly, whether they live in Thunder Bay, where we build most of our transit vehicles, or in Brampton. Credit to this Premier and her leadership for getting the job done.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. The true price of the many Liberal scandals is hitting home in northern Ontario. To pay for their gas plant scandal or their smart meter scandal, this government is firing nurses. Hundreds of nurses have been fired in Sudbury, Timmins, the Soo and my hometown of North Bay. A recent Sudbury Star headline reads "Nurse Lay-offs Jeopardize Lives." Or the North Bay Nugget headline: "Deaths Will Rise if Nursing Cuts Not Opposed." The Liberal government just fired 158 health care workers at the North Bay hospital. Speaker, that's on top of the 197 they fired over the last three years.

When will this government come clean and admit they are firing nurses to pay for their scandals?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I've had the opportunity to speak with the member opposite specifically about his hospital in North Bay. He does know, because we've talked about this, that the funding in that hospital has increased by over \$100 million since we came into office.

He also knows, and I took some time to detail this with him because I believe it's important, that the LHIN and the hospital are still having discussions. There has been no decision. There isn't an official plan going forward by the hospital that has been approved by the LHIN. The LHIN and the hospital are in those negotiations, working first and foremost to make sure there will be no negative impact on patient care.

I'm confident that if we give that time and space to the LHIN and to the hospital to have those negotiations, to build that plan together—as well, the ministry has been working diligently with both parties to make sure that we're prepared to step in where we need to to make sure that quality of care is maintained.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Premier: The Auditor General told us that the consequences of Liberal spending would “crowd out” the programs Ontarians depend on. Add the cost of their scandals and we now see what this government is doing. Waste a billion dollars on the Ornge scandal? Fire 100 nurses in Timmins and the Soo. Waste a billion dollars on the gas plant scandal? Fire 100 nurses in Sudbury. Waste a couple of billion dollars on smart meters? Fire a couple of hundred nurses in North Bay. Get caught paying \$10,000 to have computer files deleted? Don't worry; just fire another nurse up north.

Speaker, how many more nurses and front-line health care workers is this government going to fire to pay for their next scandal?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

1110

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The member opposite of course has his own list; here's mine. That opposition party in the last election promised to fire 100,000 workers in the broader public sector, many of them health care workers. That party opposite, when they were in government, fired thousands of nurses and closed dozens of hospitals. We've hired since we came into office to correct their mistakes and the damage that they have done—have hired more than 24,000 nurses. More than 10,000 of those are registered nurses. And, of course, Sudbury, the very first location in this province to have a nurse-practitioner-led clinic, the first of 25 that exist in this province today.

That's our commitment. It's not the commitment of your party. In fact, we've corrected over the last decade the errors—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Stop the clock. As you have been reminded, this is the chair that you speak to and not through. This is the chair that you speak to when asking questions and delivering answers.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question, through you, Mr. Speaker, is to the Premier. Your Liberal operative, Mr. Loughheed, who has done a lot of work for both yourself and Justin Trudeau, has said that he'd been trying for years to get Mr. Thibeault to run in the Ontario Legislature. In the end, there was just one problem, and that was that there was a Mr. Olivier who wanted to run for that nomination. Surely this hurdle must have come up in your discussion with Mr. Thibeault. Our question simply is this: Can you confirm that you actually talked about the problems in regard to the nomination with Mr. Thibeault before he ran?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, Speaker, I'm not sure the member heard my response earlier. I will restate that I think the opposition should not be soliciting the government to interfere in a judicial proceeding. It would be highly inappropriate. Our system ensures that there is clear delineation between the political side—the legislative branch and the executive branch—and the judicial, the court system. I think the member will agree with me that it would be very inappropriate for any member of this House to interfere in this matter or speak to it. We'll let the judicial proceedings continue and have the facts come out and deliberations made at that stage.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): To the Chair, please.

Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Through you, Speaker, back to the Premier: No, I don't agree with that. The facts are, Mr. Thibeault had discussions with a number of Liberal operatives, including the Premier, in regard to running in the Sudbury by-election. Our question is a very simple one: Did the Premier or anyone else have discussions with Mr. Thibeault vis-à-vis the problems they were going to have when it came to the nomination process, yes or no?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: With all due respect to the member opposite, he should know that in our system, facts are not litigated in the chamber of the House. There's a reason that a judge is referred to as the trier of fact. It's the judge's job to determine the facts.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I think the member opposite should listen to his deputy leader. He's pleading with them, he's begging them not to ask these questions. I think they're jeopardizing his law licence as a result by not heeding his advice on this matter. This is a judicial proceeding. We should not be interfering, and we will not be commenting any further on it.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is for the minister responsible for seniors' affairs. The oldest members of the baby boom generation in North America turned 65 in

2011. By the year 2036, our province's older adult population will more than double to 4.1 million seniors. This major change is going to affect every jurisdiction in Canada, and it's presenting both challenges and opportunities for every community here in Ontario.

Minister, you recently launched the Age-Friendly Community Planning Grant, which is going to help build more accessible and inclusive communities across the province. This funding is very important, and it's been well received by municipalities and organizations across the province, including in my riding of Kitchener Centre, where the city of Kitchener received \$50,000.

Can the minister please inform this House how this new grant is going to help improve the lives of seniors in Ontario?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Thank you to the member from Kitchener Centre.

Our new \$1.5-million Age-Friendly Community Planning Grant program is yet another example of our government's commitment to seniors in this province. This funding is providing grants to municipalities and organizations to undertake essential strategic planning in their communities, with a strong focus on seniors. It is assisting communities to decide what local improvements they can make to enable people of all ages to fully participate in community life, such as installing automatic doors, adding benches in parks and roadways, increasing accessibility of retail centres and transportation, and installing countdown timers at crosswalks.

Working together with municipalities to invest in age-friendly communities is part of our government's economic commitment to help build Ontario up, and also to build a better Ontario for our seniors.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: It's very encouraging to see the steps that we are taking to actively support municipalities across Ontario as they plan to accommodate seniors to contribute and stay active in all aspects of life.

In my community, as mentioned, the municipality is receiving \$50,000 for a project that's going to conduct a needs assessment and develop an action plan to address any identified needs and gaps for seniors in Kitchener. This project is also directed at ensuring that my community is not only friendly for older adults but also for persons with all abilities and of all ages. We want Kitchener to continue being as vibrant and healthy as possible.

I've already received lots of positive feedback from the city and from local seniors' groups that are expressing interest and gratitude for this funding.

Speaker, can the minister please elaborate on other initiatives that we have undertaken to develop more age-friendly communities across Ontario?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Again, thanks to the member.

Our collective challenge is to ensure that our communities grow to meet the evolving needs of every person, regardless of their age or ability. This is why age-friendly planning is so important, and it is why we will continue to work with municipalities, seniors' organizations and community partners as well.

Ontario is investing an additional \$200,000 in an outreach initiative program to provide free assistance across the province to communities that are interested in adopting age-friendly planning principles.

We have developed an invaluable planning guide to provide essential information to municipalities on the development, implementation and evaluation of plans for age-friendly communities. As well, we have been partnering with the University of Waterloo, the Ontario Interdisciplinary Council for Aging and Health, and the Seniors Health Knowledge Network to lead this particular outreach.

We will continue to find new ways to serve our seniors.

HOME CARE

Mr. Todd Smith: My question is for the Premier this morning. Premier, one of the most frequent issues that comes up in my constituency office in Belleville is home care—or the lack of it. Patients and their families are often on the receiving end of much less care than what the CCAC has originally promised them. Last week, we learned from the Auditor General why.

The minister's probably going to pop up like a Whac-A-Mole and tell us that he's spending millions more on home care, but what the Auditor General told us last week is that more and more money is being sunk into administration and sunshine list salaries, and less and less is going into actual health care on the front lines.

Premier, can you explain why only 47% of people who need to see a nurse in the first 24 hours after leaving hospital are actually seeing one of the home care workers, and why administrative salaries have gone up by 27%?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question. It is unacceptable, that figure that he just described about the rapid-response nurses. It's so important, when individuals do transition out of hospital, that they can expect to receive that care when they arrive home, to support them. We will be working with our LHINs and our CCACs to make sure we can improve that, to set targets and to measure the success, so we actually see that improvement in that area.

I had said last week as well, with the Auditor General, that we accept all of her recommendations; they're equally important. She also has an important recommendation number 5, which says essentially that we should review the entire model of delivery of home care to Ontario citizens. We plan on not having another review. We've been spending a long time looking at this. We have Gail Donner's report from earlier this year to benefit from. We're taking the whole set of recommendations and moving forward to make sure that we're providing the best possible care we can for these vulnerable individuals.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: Speaker, with all due respect, and back to the Premier, you've had 12 years to figure this

out. You're dumping millions of dollars into the salaries of people who don't see patients.

Katie Hollister-Lobe in my riding is one such case. She was originally told that 90 hours of care per month would be provided to her mother, who has end-stage dementia. That was reduced first to 80 hours per month, and is now being reduced all the way from 90 down to 40 hours a month. Katie and her husband had managed to cobble together some additional care through community care programs that they pay for, but that barely covers the hours that the CCAC originally promised her mother. They may have to leave their jobs. They may have to move.

Speaker, can the minister explain why Katie's mother, who spent 42 years as a nurse, deserved to have her care cut so that more money can be put into administration, into the bank accounts of those working in administration, executives at CCACs?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I think most of us know that CCACs were actually a creation of the Conservative Party in the late 1990s. We actually saved a significant amount of money when we took the PCs' 43 CCACs that they created around the province and reduced them to 14, so that they were coordinated well with the LHINs, as well.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Are you saying they're a bad thing? Are you going to disband them? What are you going to do? Don't blame the Tories for your mess.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke is warned. Finish.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: After the Progressive Conservative Party created those 43 CCACs in the 1990s, in fact, these two reports this year are really the only substantive reports that have been done by anyone of our CCACs in that 20-year period. I welcome the recommendations. We plan on implementing all of them, Mr. Speaker.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. The Premier has stated that her deputy chief of staff has been cleared of any charges or any wrongdoings by the OPP. However, that's not true. It's been made explicitly clear that the investigation is still ongoing. Charges may still be filed against her staff under the provincial Election Act, and she may very well be at the centre of the scandal as the person who directed Mr. Lougheed to make the call for the Premier.

Ontarians deserve honesty, and it shouldn't take the courts to get it. Will the Premier please be up front with Ontarians and address the allegations of bribery in her office?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, let me just correct what the member opposite said. What I said is that Pat Sorbara's counsel have told her that there will be no criminal charges laid against her. I also said that as far

as I know, the investigation by Elections Ontario is ongoing. So I just want to correct what the member said.

We have co-operated with the investigations, we will continue to co-operate with the investigations, but there is now an issue before the courts, and I will not comment on that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The Premier is in fact quoted as saying, "I never believed that my staff did anything wrong." But the reality is that her deputy chief of staff is still under ongoing investigation. How is it that the Premier had no knowledge that her staff and a high-ranking Liberal campaign team member were engaging in illegal activity during the by-election? It has taken an investigation and criminal charges laid by the OPP to uncover corruption in the Premier's office. How could the Premier be so unaware of this alleged illegal activity in her own office by her own staff?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, Speaker, I'm really surprised by the line of questioning from the deputy leader, who is an esteemed member of the same profession that I share, as a lawyer, who knows really well that court proceedings must not be interfered with. I'm sure he has advised clients in the past to do the same, to make sure that they let the courts decide if a matter is under a court proceeding.

I think that in all the questions that he has been asking, he is essentially soliciting the government, the Premier, to move away from that very well-known principle in our system where we keep the political system separate from our legal system.

I would urge the member opposite that we should focus on real issues that matter to Ontarians, issues like building our communities up, making sure that we continue to build infrastructure, and ensure that our province's economy is growing every single day.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: My question this morning is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Ontario is a leading jurisdiction for the exploration and production of minerals in Canada, and a major player across the world. The mining and exploration industry is an incredibly important contributor to our provincial economy. This is particularly clear in my community of Sudbury, with a rich history in mining, Mr. Speaker.

While lower metal prices are having an impact, the forecast for mineral production in Sudbury is bright. The area is home to several of Ontario's key advanced mineral exploration projects.

Our government continues to invest in this important sector and ensure that the mining sector remains a vibrant part of our province's economy. Mr. Speaker, through you, can the minister inform the House on the status of the mining industry in Ontario and its significance to our provincial economy?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, let me thank the member for Sudbury for the question. He's certainly

one of the strongest advocates for the mining sector in the Ontario Legislature. Thank you so much.

We are indeed proud of the fact that Ontario remains a leading jurisdiction for the exploration and the production of minerals in Canada, and a major player across the world. We have world expertise in mine financing, geology, engineering, the advantages of a strong economy, competitive business costs, and a world-class research and development environment as well.

The bottom line is pretty interesting: In 2003, exploration expenditures in the province of Ontario were \$219 million. In 2014, despite some of the challenges in the sector, they were over \$500 million, which is great news.

The value of mineral production: In 2003, mineral production in the province was \$5.7 billion—a lot. In 2014, it was over \$11 billion, a record-setting performance.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: It is part of our government's plan to build Ontario up by creating a dynamic and supportive environment where businesses can prosper. Ontario is a leader not only in the Canadian mining industry but also globally. There are hundreds of international companies in Ontario engaging in mineral exploration, and hundreds more in the supplies and services sector who benefit from that investment.

The total number of direct jobs in mineral production was 26,000 in 2014. There are also an additional 50,000 jobs associated with manufacturing and processing. The mineral sector is the largest private sector employer of aboriginal peoples in Canada.

I know that the minister recently celebrated the success of Detour Gold at their site just outside of Cochrane. Can the minister please elaborate on the status of the gold sector in Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: It's a great follow-up. Just last week, I was joined by a number of municipal leaders and aboriginal leaders on an exciting trip to Detour Gold's site, just a couple of hundred kilometres from Cochrane, as they poured their one-millionth ounce of gold. That, of course, was only 30 months after their first gold bar in February 2013. It was a tremendous experience to see them pour the molten gold. Only moments after, I was holding that solid gold bar in my hand. They wouldn't let me take it with me.

Let's put our province's gold sector in perspective. Approximately two thirds of the exploration spending has gone towards exploration for gold in 2014, with similar spending expected this year. Much of this spending is at key gold projects in traditional gold camps across northern Ontario.

We've got a great story to tell the mining sector. Certainly, we're very, very proud of the strong role Ontario is playing.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, I hope you will remember that in 2013, municipalities in Ontario

were hit with a major ice storm that took out hydro for days and resulted in damages that cost millions of dollars.

Almost two years later, many municipalities are still waiting for part of the emergency support they were promised. When asked why this was taking so long, the parliamentary assistant of municipal affairs and housing blamed the municipalities.

Could the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing tell us whether he agrees that the delay is the fault of municipalities, or whether the provincial government should take the blame?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Someone once said, "No one's guilty but everybody's responsible." I wouldn't want to tag responsibility for the slowness of any system on anyone, especially the federal government, that has to clear the applications and is much more stringent in terms of the requirements, which played some role. I wouldn't want to do that in this House, because that would be unfair.

1130

There were some struggles. Municipalities had to document their real costs. There was a procedure set out to allow that to happen. We followed that procedure, and there was a lot of money delivered to municipalities to assist, money that we hadn't budgeted for but still delivered.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Partial funding after two years is not the emergency support these municipalities had been promised. The government took over nine months to even create an application and waited until November to do the training—that's the following year.

We all know municipalities went to great lengths to get those applications done last winter and get them in, and with that, you will know municipalities are not the problem with this program.

Would the minister apologize for his parliamentary assistant's attempt to blame municipalities, and apologize for his failure to deliver the emergency support municipalities need now and yesterday, not—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: We would much rather point direction than fingers. I'm not going to apologize on behalf of municipalities for whatever time it took for them to get their material together. We respect municipalities; they work hard.

By the way, let me just take a minute to compliment the EMS workers and the hydro workers and all the others who worked tirelessly to recover from that ice storm. It was something that befell our province, which we didn't anticipate, but when push came to shove, we all worked together to respond appropriately.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre. The people of Sudbury know who Mr.

Gerry Lougheed Jr. is. They know he is a Liberal fundraiser for the Premier and, right now, for Justin Trudeau. They know that he is a senior Liberal insider who does the bidding of the provincial and federal parties in Sudbury and beyond.

The Premier was given a chance to show some integrity and show that she is the Premier for all of Ontario. Instead, why has the Premier consistently put well-connected Liberal insiders ahead of the interests of the people of Sudbury? When will the interests of the good people of Sudbury actually come first?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, I would restate that what the member is asking about speaks to a matter that is before the courts, and it would be highly inappropriate to interfere in the matter.

This government continues to work hard and has invested heavily in improving the lives of the people of Sudbury when it comes to investing in our health care and education. In Sudbury, the investments have been at record levels over the last 12 years, and we're very proud of everything that we have done in Sudbury, the work that our former member of provincial Parliament, cabinet Minister Rick Bartolucci, did on behalf of the people of Sudbury, and the work that the current member for Sudbury continues to do on behalf of Sudbury.

That community is much better off over the last 12 years in investment in our health care and education system than ever, and we stand by that record.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Back to the Premier: Everybody in Sudbury knows what role Gerry Lougheed Jr. played in the Sudbury by-election for the Premier and that he is playing right now for Mr. Trudeau. He is a senior Liberal insider, and he does whatever is necessary for the Liberal Party. In all of the conversations between the Premier, Mrs. Sorbara, Mr. Thibeault and Mr. Lougheed, not once did what is best for the people of Sudbury ever come up—not once.

Will the Premier admit that through all of this, it has always been about what is best for the Liberal Party and never about what is best for the good people of Sudbury? My question is simple: When will the interests of the good people of Sudbury come ahead of the interests of the Liberal Party?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: This government and this Premier will continue to stand by all communities across this province, including Sudbury. We have invested an incredible amount when it comes to health care and infrastructure in Sudbury. That is why, after the great work that Rick Bartolucci did in that community, that community once again in a by-election voted for the current member from Sudbury, Glenn Thibeault. Why? Because they supported a government that has continued to invest in Sudbury and who has always put the needs and wants of the Sudbury community up front. That is why we have somebody who has devoted his life serving Sudbury and now is a member of the government and continues to serve that community.

We will not leave Sudbury behind. We'll continue to make sure that Sudbury is ahead and a priority for this government.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. Over this summer our government hosted the Climate Summit of the Americas, from July 7 to July 9. Like many Ontarians, constituents in my riding of Ottawa South are concerned about climate change and greenhouse gas pollution. They're worried about what kind of world their children and their grandchildren will be left with if we don't take strong action on climate change. There is frustration at the lack of strong action on climate change from national governments, and in particular from their federal government.

Speaker, through you, could the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change inform the House about the outcomes of the Climate Summit of the Americas and their importance as part of Ontario's leadership in fighting climate change?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank the member for Ottawa South for this and for his leadership on this issue.

The results of the summit were quite extraordinary. We had 22 members of the Brazilian, US, Mexican and Canadian federations sign on to an agreement and now committed to enough emission reductions between now and 2030—equivalent to the annual emissions in one year of the United States.

As a matter of fact, Governor Brown and I two days ago were standing on a stage in New York City, inducting 14 more members from the Americas into this group, doubling the number of countries.

The United Nations framework on climate change was so taken with this that they have now set aside a day as a result of these efforts, for the first time, to bring what are called subnational or infranational governments into the formal UN reduction strategy. This was an enormous accomplishment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: My question again is back to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. I'd like to thank him for updating us on the success we had in bringing leaders from across the Americas together to take action on this important issue.

Increasingly, provinces and states are providing leadership on climate change, especially where national governments have failed to take meaningful action. In Ontario, we beat our 2014 greenhouse gas target of 6% below 1990 levels. Ontario is continuing to demonstrate leadership on climate change. It was announced in April that we will be moving forward with a cap-and-trade system to reduce greenhouse gas pollution while keeping Ontario's industries competitive.

Speaker, through you, could the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change inform the House on

what the commitments of the climate action statement mean and why subnational action on climate change is so important?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: One of the other things that came up when I was at the UN last week during Climate Week—what came up often, over and over again, was the incredible leadership of Premier Wynne, Premier Couillard and Jerry Brown. When I was speaking with Christina Figueres, one of the things that came out of that was that on the first day of the summit, Undersecretary Lacy from Mexico committed the Mexican government to work with California, Quebec and Ontario to create a carbon market across America. That is viewed as one of the most important steps to securing it.

But I also want to thank members opposite: the member for Huron—Bruce and the member for Toronto—Danforth, who attended and participated and have been working, I think, to elevate this above partisan politics. Because it really goes to the question from the member from Oxford: We're going to face more flood events like in Burlington and more damage like we saw on GO Transit. We will see many more years where we lose 80% of our apple crop and where things like ice storms cost the public. That's why—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

FATAL TRAFFIC ACCIDENT

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton—Lawrence on a point of order.

Mr. Mike Colle: I wonder if we could have a moment's silence for the grandfather and the three children that were killed in a horrible accident yesterday at Kirby Road and Kipling Avenue, in York region, and just reflect on this incredible tragedy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton—Lawrence is seeking unanimous consent for a moment of silence upon the tragedy. Do we agree? Agreed.

Could I ask all members in the House and all visitors to please rise for a moment of silence.

The House observed a moment's silence.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Agriculture on a point of order.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thank you very much, Speaker. In the west public gallery this morning, we have members of the Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition. They will be having meetings at Queen's Park today and hosting a reception in room 228 later this afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Burlington on a point of order.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I'd like to introduce two members of the public from my riding of Burlington who are in the gallery today, members of the Canadian Association of Physician Assistants, here for a luncheon reception: Deniece O'Leary, president of the Ontario

chapter of the Canadian Association of Physician Assistants, and Julie Kasperski, vice-president of the Ontario chapter of the Canadian Association of Physician Assistants. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of the Environment on a point of order.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Again, on a point of order, my apologies—I just wanted to recognize the very bright young girls from Branksome Hall who were here until a few minutes ago. These are soon-to-be extraordinary young women and leaders, and it was very great to have them here in the House today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before we move into our deferred votes, I'm going to recommend to the House and to all members, if your visitors don't show up during introductions, that if you know they're coming, you might want to do a pre-introduction during the time allotted for introductions. That allows us to continue with the schedule that we have got established. You would be helping us in our agreed-upon process by the House leaders. If there is a change to be made, it must be made by them.

DEFERRED VOTES

ENDING COAL

FOR CLEANER AIR ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015

SUR L'ABANDON DU CHARBON POUR UN AIR PLUS PROPRE

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 9, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act to require the cessation of coal use to generate electricity at generation facilities / *Projet de loi 9, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement pour exiger la cessation de l'utilisation du charbon pour produire de l'électricité dans les installations de production.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1142 to 1147.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On December 2, 2014, Mr. Murray moved second reading of Bill 9, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act to require the cessation of coal use to generate electricity at generation facilities.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Anderson, Granville
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Arnott, Ted
Baker, Yvan
Balkissoon, Bas

Gravelle, Michael
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hatfield, Percy
Hoggarth, Ann
Horwath, Andrea

Moridi, Reza
Munro, Julia
Murray, Glen R.
Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Naqvi, Yasir
Natyshak, Taras

Ballard, Chris
 Berardinetti, Lorenzo
 Bisson, Gilles
 Bradley, James J.
 Brown, Patrick
 Chiarelli, Bob
 Clark, Steve
 Colle, Mike
 Coteau, Michael
 Crack, Grant
 Damerla, Dipika
 Del Duca, Steven
 Delaney, Bob
 Dhillon, Vic
 Dickson, Joe
 DiNovo, Cheri
 Dong, Han
 Duguid, Brad
 Fedeli, Victor
 Fife, Catherine
 Flynn, Kevin
 Forster, Cindy
 Fraser, John
 French, Jennifer K.
 Gates, Wayne
 Gélinas, France

Hoskins, Eric
 Hudak, Tim
 Hunter, Mitzie
 Jaczek, Helena
 Jones, Sylvia
 Kiwala, Sophie
 Kwinter, Monte
 Lalonde, Marie-France
 Leal, Jeff
 MacCharles, Tracy
 MacLeod, Lisa
 Malhi, Harinder
 Mangat, Amrit
 Mantha, Michael
 Martins, Cristina
 Martow, Gila
 Matthews, Deborah
 Mauro, Bill
 McDonell, Jim
 McGarry, Kathryn
 McMahon, Eleanor
 McMeekin, Ted
 Meilleur, Madeleine
 Milczyn, Peter Z.
 Miller, Norm
 Miller, Paul

Oraziotti, David
 Pettapiece, Randy
 Potts, Arthur
 Qaadri, Shafiq
 Rinaldi, Lou
 Sandals, Liz
 Sattler, Peggy
 Scott, Laurie
 Sergio, Mario
 Singh, Jagmeet
 Smith, Todd
 Sousa, Charles
 Tabuns, Peter
 Takhar, Harinder S.
 Thibeault, Glenn
 Thompson, Lisa M.
 Vanthof, John
 Vernile, Daiene
 Walker, Bill
 Wilson, Jim
 Wong, Soo
 Wynne, Kathleen O.
 Yakubuski, John
 Yurek, Jeff
 Zimmer, David

Team Canada, and I hope Gordie's steadfast efforts will lead him to many more successes on the road to Rio in 2016.

FORT ERIE RACE TRACK

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to use my time today to offer my congratulations to the Fort Erie Race Track; to their CEO, Jim Thibert; and the whole team for having another record-breaking year.

Last year at the track they had two days with over \$1 million in wagers. That was record-breaking compared to the first 117 years. This year they blew that out of the water. This year they had six days with over \$1 million in wagers, including a day when they had nearly \$2 million.

It's not just that betting numbers are up. The attendance at the track is up; food sales are up; the number of programs sold at the track is up; every area of the track is beating expectations.

For having the biggest year that anyone has ever seen at the Fort Erie Race Track, I'd like to offer Jim, his staff, and all the unionized workers congratulations.

I can't speak about the Fort Erie Race Track without bringing up the slots. Not only has this government taken away the slots at the Fort Erie Race Track; they've also excluded them from the surrounding gaming zone, costing hundreds of people their jobs in my riding.

Mr. Speaker, this is a track that, year after year, breaks its own records, and year after year exceeds its performance goals. But this government refuses to help the track and all the people who make a living out of it.

Three years ago, the Premier committed to integrate horse racing with the OLG, including gaming, which would bring the slots back to Fort Erie. The racetrack has met their end of the bargain, but where has this government been?

Fort Erie has seven racing days left. I would like to ask all the members here to come to the Fort Erie Race Track.

CANADIAN CANCER SURVIVOR NETWORK

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: On September 16, I had the honour of hosting the Canadian Cancer Survivor Network reception here at Queen's Park. This is the second time I have hosted the reception, and what a great turnout. Thank you to everyone who came. As a survivor of cancer and a supporter of the Canadian Cancer Survivor Network, I know the importance of receptions and events like this, which help raise awareness so that critical research can be done to help combat this disease.

At the reception, we had the privilege to hear stories from three men who had survived prostate cancer. Their stories were enlightening and very emotional. I think that those of us who were present can agree that we all learned a lesson about how important our health is and

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 95; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated June 2, 2015, the bill is ordered referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

There being no further deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1151 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GORDIE MICHIE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate a young Parapan Am Games athlete from my riding, Gordie Michie. A proud member of the St. Thomas Jumbo Jets Swim Team, Gordie brought home several medals from the Toronto 2015 Parapan Am Games that were held this summer. Michie made Canada and our community proud when he won gold during the 100-metre men's backstroke. He went on to bring home silver in the 200-metre individual men's medley, bronze in the 200-metre men's freestyle, and concluded with another bronze in the 100-metre men's breaststroke.

It is very impressive to see such determination and ambition in Gordie. What an honour it is to travel to our province's capital to compete for our great country.

On behalf of the residents of Elgin-Middlesex-London, I'd like to thank Gordie for all of his hard work and tireless training efforts that brought him to this incredible achievement. It is a privilege to represent

how critical it can be to make sure you have regular checkups with your doctor.

My brother, just last year, was diagnosed with prostate cancer, and I'm happy to say his prognosis is good. Some people are not so fortunate.

The Canadian Cancer Survivor Network works to empower collaborative action by cancer patients, families and communities to identify and work to remove barriers to optimal care. They ensure that cancer survivors have access to education programs and have opportunities to have their voices heard in planning and implementing an optimal health care system.

Once again, I was very happy to host this reception, and I would like to thank the Canadian Cancer Survivor Network for all the great work they do.

AMATEUR SPORTS CHAMPIONS

Mr. Michael Harris: While it's always an honour to speak about the great folks in Waterloo region, I'm especially proud after a summer sports season that saw so many of our young people achieve so much.

I'll start with the New Hamburg Midget Heat, who went 12 and 0 to win the gold at the under-18 men's Canadian fast pitch championship in New Brunswick, defeating my seatmate's Tweed team.

Speaking of perfect records, the Kitchener Panthers seven-and-eight-year-old minor rookie baseball team came about as close to perfection as you can get. The Panthers went 61 and 1 this season, completing their dominance with a 13-5 victory over Leaside to win the Ontario Baseball Association's provincial championships in Kitchener.

On the soccer pitch, it was our under-14 Woolwich Wolfpack girls rolling to victory at the Ontario Cup, defeating the Brampton Brams United Rebels 3-0 in the final.

Ontario Cup honours also went to the under-16 Kitchener 99As, who dropped the King City Royals 3-2 after going into halftime down 2-1. Never count the people from Waterloo region out, Speaker.

Best of luck to the Wolfpack in Kitchener as they head to the Canadian championships in St. John's, Newfoundland, and Surrey, BC.

Meantime, Kitchener-Waterloo United FC sit on top of their soccer world following a 4-3 defeat of the New York Red Bulls for the Professional Development League championship.

And I would be remiss, Speaker, if I didn't mention Kitchener's Mandy Bujold, who made us all so proud in taking home boxing gold at the Pan Am Games.

We're proud of all of them and thank them for their championship efforts.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I had the chance to visit some of our jails and correctional facilities during our

summer intersession, and I look forward to continuing those visits.

Our jails cannot be ignored. Our correctional officers, staff and nurses cannot be ignored. Our inmates cannot be ignored, and we cannot continue this out of sight out of mind mentality. We cannot pretend there isn't a crisis in corrections.

Our correctional system is full of safety concerns for those who live and work in it. Chronic understaffing means that jails are in lockdowns more often and inmates are stuck in their cells. This makes for an even higher-stress environment than you can imagine. Constant overcrowding means that people sleep on mats on the floor. It means that infirmaries are being used as cells and not for care.

Correctional officers and probation and parole officers are among our first and constant responders who deal with stress, threat, danger and trauma on a regular and ongoing basis. Jails should be a safe place to live and work.

Mr. Speaker, here's just one example of something to address: Metal detectors don't pick up ceramic blades or most of what gets into our jails. So when is this government going to commit to safety and commit to scanners that will do the job?

The more weapons, the more overcrowding, the more stress, the more danger for everyone living and working in the facilities. The less this government supports our system, the more it breaks down.

Our shiny new P3 jails have been in the news for a number of reasons. Glass that breaks shouldn't be used in our jails. Locks that can be unlocked shouldn't be used in our jails. Pieces of the building should not break off easily to be used as weapons.

This is a government that has allowed shortcuts to happen, so when are they going to address this crisis in corrections?

DRY STONE FESTIVAL

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I rise today to applaud the 2015 international Dry Stone Festival that was held on Amherst Island this last weekend. Amherst Island holds the greatest concentration of historic drystone walls and fences in Canada. Some are close to 200 years old, and most were built by Irish settlers.

The festival was a great success due to the passionate and tireless commitment of organizers Andrea Cross, Dry Stone Canada and the Dry Stone Wall Association of Ireland, and, of course, an army of volunteers and over 30 drystone wallers from very far.

1310

Drystone wallers are sculptors guided by nature's canvas. The 450-million-year-old blocks they coax and coerce into long-lasting art forms are reminders of our historical connections to the landscape.

The festival celebrated Irish heritage and will boost local tourism and the local economy through the creation of a new, year-round attraction. Indeed, it is the world's

first attempt to mimic the ancient, mystical, Mayan-Celtic lunar solar stone calendars of early civilization. I will never forget the moment when we saw the sun break through the clouds and shine on a wall behind. Absolutely fantastic.

I am so proud of our government's support for the festival through a \$73,000 tourism initiative grant. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Merci. Meegwetch.

ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Today I would like to recognize just a few of the many communities, church groups, service organizations, art organizations, businesses and individual citizens in Perth-Wellington who are coming together to assist in the Syrian refugee crisis. Those groups include the city of Stratford and the Stratford Festival. They have partnered to raise the funds necessary to sponsor several families from Syria and help them settle into the city of Stratford.

They formed a steering committee comprised of a local city councillor, interested residents, members of the faith community and members of the council of churches. Together, this committee has set out to raise \$225,000 to help re-settle a minimum of five families.

I would also like to recognize the Mennonite Central Committee for its outstanding work on this issue. With their history and expertise in supporting refugees, it's no wonder Stratford is working with this reputable organization. MCC will also be opening a gift registry so that local residents can make donations.

The Stratford Festival is also doing its part. The festival will be donating funds from a performance to the fundraising effort. They expect to raise \$20,000 in a single evening. I would encourage anyone interested in more information about this performance to contact the festival directly.

Tomorrow, a public information session is being held in Stratford city auditorium at 7 p.m.

Again, thank you to our community leaders and partners for coming together to support this important, worthy cause.

RON LENYK

Mr. Bob Delaney: Mississauga lost one of its most prominent business people and one of its biggest boosters, most recognizable faces and most-liked neighbours in September. Ron Lenyk, publisher of our newspaper, the Mississauga News, passed away following heart failure. Ron served 31 years as publisher of the Mississauga News. He left in 2008 to be a vice-president of Torstar Corp., going on to become chief executive officer of Mississauga's Living Arts Centre in 2011.

Reflecting the Canada that Ron helped build, he was born in postwar West Germany in a displaced persons camp. He came to Canada with his parents in 1949 at three years old, landing in Nova Scotia's famous Pier 21.

Ron was married with two children and is survived by his wife of 45 years, Olga; daughter, Trina and her husband, Jason Christie, and their daughter, Madison; and son, Terry, and his wife, Taylor Williamson.

There was scarcely a cause or a charity in Mississauga that Ron didn't support or help out with. Ron Lenyk leaves a big legacy and always expressed confidence in the ability of our city's people to fill shoes of any size. We are a better city for having Ron Lenyk among us in the city of Mississauga.

CREDIT VALLEY TRAIL

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I rise today to share the news from the great riding of Mississauga-Brampton South of the Credit Valley Trail. On September 11, Friends of the Greenbelt announced \$100,000 to help Credit Valley Conservation and partners to bring to life a 110-kilometre trail that will stretch from Port Credit in Mississauga to Orangeville.

Each year, Ontario invests \$130 million to support over 80,000 kilometres of trails—trails that link unique communities and green spaces, and encourage people of all ages to explore their natural environment and be physically active. The Credit Valley Trail will also boost Peel region's local economy by drawing visitors and tourists.

As parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, I know the trail will create a stronger connection between urbanites and their natural environment. Awareness of our natural surroundings leads to a better understanding of the human impact on the environment and of our undeniable role in climate change.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LARRY BLAKE LIMITED ACT, 2015

Mrs. Martow moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr27, An Act to revive Larry Blake Limited.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

CAPPING TOP PUBLIC SECTOR SALARIES ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LE PLAFONNEMENT DES HAUTS TRAITEMENTS DU SECTEUR PUBLIC

Mr. Bisson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 124, An Act to cap the top public sector salaries /
Projet de loi 124, Loi plafonnant les hauts traitements du
secteur public.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of
the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a
short statement.

M. Gilles Bisson: Le projet de loi a comme but de
mettre une limite-plafond de deux fois le salaire de la
première ministre pour n'importe quel dirigeant d'une
entreprise publique.

What I just said is that the bill has as its aim to cap the
salary of those people running our public institutions at
two times the rate of what the Premier's salary is. I look
forward to that debate.

PETITIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of
Ontario:

"Whereas the Green Energy Act has driven up the cost
of electricity in Ontario due to unrealistic subsidies for
certain energy sources, including the world's highest subsid-
ies for solar power; and

"Whereas this cost is passed on to ratepayers through
the global adjustment, which can account for almost half
of a ratepayer's hydro bill; and

"Whereas the high cost of energy is severely impact-
ing the quality of life of Ontario's residents,
especially fixed-income seniors; and

"Whereas it is imperative to remedy Liberal mis-
management in the energy sector by implementing im-
mediate reforms detailed in the Ontario PC white paper
Paths to Prosperity—Affordable Energy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assem-
bly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately repeal the Green Energy Act, 2009,
and all other statutes that artificially inflate the cost of
electricity with the aim of bringing down electricity rates
and abolishing expensive surcharges such as the global
adjustment and debt retirement charges."

I fully support it and will send it with page Grace.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Todd Smith: I present this on behalf of hundreds
of people in the Marmora and Lake area.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture has
protected class 3 agricultural land from development for
the purposes of projects under the Green Energy Act; and

"Whereas the United Nations has declared the vital
importance soil plays in human civilization and
protection of this vital resource; and

"Whereas the solar energy facility, SunEdison
Cordova Solar Project, planned for Ledge Road,
Clemenger Road and Twin Sister Road, in the municipali-
ty of Marmora and Lake will occupy agricultural land
that has previously been protected against development
under the Green Energy Act;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assem-
bly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural
Affairs take the necessary steps to ensure that projects,
including the SunEdison Cordova Solar Project, that are
on protected agricultural land are protected from large-
scale, industrial energy development."

I agree with this, will sign it and send it to the table
with page Gabriel.

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PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have a petition here to the
Legislative Assembly of Ontario from people across
Durham, including Lynn Odinski.

"Privatizing Hydro One: Another wrong choice.

"Whereas once you privatize hydro, there's no return;
and

"We'll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for
schools and hospitals; and

"We'll lose our biggest economic asset and control
over our energy future; and

"We'll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like
what's happened elsewhere;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assem-
bly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario
families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for
generations to come."

I support this petition, affix my name to it and send it
with Krishaj.

LUNG HEALTH

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I have a petition that is
addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million
people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of
whom are children. Of the four chronic diseases
responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular
diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the
only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

"In the Ontario Lung Association report, Your Lungs,
Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs
the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in
direct and indirect health care costs, and this figure is
estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short
years from now;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assem-
bly of Ontario as follows:

"To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry's
private member's bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014,

which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

"Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage."

I agree with this. I will affix my name and send it to the table with Sydney.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Mrs. Gila Martow: I have a payroll tax petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Liberal government has brought forward a payroll tax in the form of a mandatory Ontario Retirement Pension Plan (ORPP); and

"Whereas the Liberal government has not conducted nor released a cost-benefit analysis of this new payroll tax; and

"Whereas internal Ministry of Finance documents show that the Liberals are aware that the ORPP will increase the cost of doing business in Ontario and kill jobs in the province; and

"Whereas a McKinsey and Co. survey shows that more than four out of every five Canadians already save enough for their retirement; and

"Whereas the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has stated that a majority of its members would have to lay off workers; and

"Whereas the government's plan would force the cancellation of many existing retirement plans that have better employer contribution rates; and

"Whereas low-income earners will have their retirement savings clawed back under this scheme; and

"Whereas Ontarians cannot afford another tax on top of their already skyrocketing hydro bills and ever-increasing cost of living;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To abandon the idea of an Ontario pension tax."

I will gladly affix my signature and give it to page Matt.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. John Vanthof: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas once you privatize hydro, there's no return; and

"We'll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

"We'll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

"We'll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what's happened elsewhere;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come."

I wholeheartedly agree and will hand it to page Sameer.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Ms. Daiene Vernile: This petition is titled "Planning for Ontario's Future."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas it is absolutely crucial that more is done to provide Ontarians retirement financial security which they can rely on;

"Whereas the federal government has refused to partner with our government to ensure that Ontarians have a secure retirement plan;

"Whereas more than three million Ontarians rely on the Canada Pension Plan alone, that currently does not provide enough to support an adequate standard of living;

"Whereas the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan will provide the safe and stable retirement that Ontarians need;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of the Ontario assembly support a plan to move forward with an Ontario-made pension retirement plan that will provide a financially secure retirement for Ontarians."

I strongly agree with this petition and will affix my name to it.

CONCUSSION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm delivering this on behalf of my constituents in Nepean-Carleton but also for people as far away as Kingston and White Lake.

"Whereas the rate of concussions among children and youth has increased significantly from 2003 to 2011, from 466 to 754 per 100,000 for boys, and from 208 to 440 per 100,000 for girls; and

"Whereas hard falls and the use of force, often found in full-contact sports, have been found to be the cause of over half of all hospital visits for pediatric concussions; and

"Whereas the signs and symptoms of concussions can be difficult to identify unless coaches, mentors, youth and parents have been educated to recognize them; and

"Whereas preventative measures, such as rules around return-to-play for young athletes who have suspected concussions, as well as preventative education and awareness have been found to significantly decrease the danger of serious or fatal injuries; and

"Whereas Bill 39, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to concussions, was introduced in 2012 but never passed; and

"Whereas 49" separate "recommendations" were made ... "to increase awareness, training and education around concussions" after a jury deliberated from a "coroner's inquest into the concussion death of Rowan Stringer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario government review and adopt Rowan's Law to ensure the safety and health of children and youth athletes across the province."

I, of course, endorse this petition. I ascribe my name to it and I present it to page Siena. Thank you, Siena.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario in support of a full range of core hospital services at both the South Muskoka Memorial Hospital in Bracebridge and the Huntsville District Memorial Hospital.

"Whereas the provision of a full range of core hospital services, including acute care in-patient, emergency, diagnostic and surgical services, at both the Huntsville District Memorial Hospital and the South Muskoka Memorial Hospital in Bracebridge by Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare (MAHC) is vital for all of the communities in the entire MAHC catchment area, including Algonquin Park; and

"Whereas the continued delivery of those core hospital services at both South Muskoka Memorial Hospital in Bracebridge and the Huntsville District Memorial Hospital is crucial to the long-term sustainability and economic vitality of the two communities and the entire MAHC catchment area, including Algonquin Park; and

"Whereas the residents of Huntsville, Bracebridge and the other communities in the MAHC catchment area have strongly supported multi-site delivery of a full range of core hospital services, including acute care in-patient, emergency, diagnostic and surgical services, at both the South Muskoka Memorial Hospital in Bracebridge and the Huntsville District Memorial Hospital; and

"Whereas, contrary to the wishes of the people of the entire MAHC catchment area, the board of directors of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare has approved the 'one-hospital model' as the preferred model for hospital service delivery in the future;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) That the province of Ontario ensure that a full range of core hospital services, including acute care in-patient, emergency, diagnostic and surgical services, are maintained on a multi-site basis at both the Huntsville District Memorial Hospital and the South Muskoka Memorial Hospital in Bracebridge;

"(2) That the province of Ontario ensure that the changes to Ontario's health care delivery system

currently being implemented do not negatively impact access to services and the quality of care in Bracebridge, Huntsville and the entire MAHC catchment area, including Algonquin Provincial Park;

"(3) That the province of Ontario ensure that the changes to Ontario's health care delivery system currently being implemented recognize the unique and important role that smaller hospitals, such as the Huntsville District Memorial Hospital and the South Muskoka Memorial Hospital have in promoting economic development and creating sustainable communities in Ontario."

I support this petition and have signed it.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It's entitled "Planning for Ontario's Future."

"Whereas it is absolutely crucial that more is done to provide Ontarians retirement financial security which they can rely on;

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"Whereas the federal government has refused to partner with our government to ensure that Ontarians have a secure retirement plan;

"Whereas more than three million Ontarians rely on the Canada Pension Plan alone, that currently does not provide enough to support an adequate standard of living;

"Whereas the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan will provide the safe and stable retirement that Ontarians need;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of the Ontario assembly support a plan to move forward with an Ontario-made pension retirement plan that will provide a financially secure retirement for Ontarians."

I agree with this petition, and I will affix my signature and hand it over to page Jacob.

DENTAL CARE

Mrs. Gila Martow: This is a new topic. The petition is called "Teeth: A Necessity, not a Luxury."

"To Kathleen Wynne, Premier of Ontario, Dr. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, as well as Patrick Brown, Leader of the Opposition:

"We, the undersigned, wish to protest the total lack of funding for dental reconstruction necessitated by cancer treatment when compared to the significant funds made readily available for breast reconstruction for women who have had cancer-related mastectomies."

I will gladly affix my name to this petition and give it to page Matthew.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are critical transportation infrastructure needs for the province;

“Whereas giving people multiple avenues for their transportation needs takes cars off the road;

“Whereas public transit increases the quality of life for Ontarians and helps the environment;

“Whereas the constituents of Orléans and east Ottawa are in need of greater transportation infrastructure;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Support the Moving Ontario Forward plan and the Ottawa LRT phase II construction, which will help address the critical transportation infrastructure needs of Orléans, east Ottawa and the province of Ontario.”

It gives me great pleasure to affix my signature and give it to page Calvin.

LANDFILL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas many of the resources of this planet are finite and are necessary to sustain both life and quality of life for future generations;

“Whereas the disposal of resources in landfills creates environmental hazards which have significant human and financial costs;

“Whereas all levels of government are elected to guarantee their constituents’ physical, financial, emotional and mental well-being;

“Whereas the health risks to the community and watershed increase in direct relationship to the proximity of any landfill site;

“Whereas the placement of a landfill in a limestone quarry has been shown to be detrimental;

“Whereas the placement of a landfill in the headwaters of multiple highly vulnerable aquifers is detrimental;

“Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, humbly petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To implement a moratorium in Oxford county, Ontario, on any future landfill construction or approval until such time as a full and comprehensive review of alternatives has been completed which would examine best practices in other jurisdictions around the world;

“That this review of alternatives would give particular emphasis to (a) practices which involve the total recycling or composting of all products currently destined for landfill sites in Ontario and (b) the production of goods which can be practically and efficiently recycled or reused so as to not require disposal.”

Thank you very much for the opportunity to present this petition, and I affix my signature as I agree with it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LES LIMITES
DES CIRCONSCRIPTIONS ÉLECTORALES

Mme Meilleur moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 115, An Act to enact the Representation Act, 2015, repeal the Representation Act, 2005 and amend the Election Act, the Election Finances Act and the Legislative Assembly Act / Projet de loi 115, Loi édictant la Loi de 2015 sur la représentation électorale, abrogeant la Loi de 2005 sur la représentation électorale et modifiant la Loi électorale, la Loi sur le financement des élections et la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Madame Meilleur has moved second reading of Bill 115. I look to the minister to lead off the debate. The Attorney General.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Scarborough Southwest.

I rise in the House today to open debate on this bill that aims to strengthen our election system. The proposed Electoral Boundaries Act will help ensure that Ontarians are represented fairly and effectively in the Legislature.

As members will recall, in June the Premier and I spoke briefly about several proposed measures to reform this province's elections laws which will strengthen the inclusive society that we are so proud of in this province.

For more than a decade, this government has demonstrated a firm commitment to ensuring we have a just and fair election system. Taking steps to ensure our election laws are not only up to date, but also progressive, is among the principal ways we have sought to achieve this.

As many of you will recall, in 2007 we considered a new electoral system for the province. To help provide voters with a say in deciding how their representatives should be elected, we held a referendum on this issue. This is something no other Ontario government has ever done. While the people decided not to proceed with a new system at that time, it was significant that we asked the question and heeded the response.

Later, in 2010, this assembly passed a bill that included several amendments to make the election process more accessible, convenient and flexible. Some of these measures included creating special ballots for those unable to make it to the polls. To better serve people with disabilities, we also made fully accessible voting locations a requirement. Shortly after, in the wake of the robocall scam during the 2011 federal election, we introduced steep fines and jail time for those committing election fraud. Clearly, our record shows that our commitment to maintaining a democratic electoral system has been unwavering.

I would now like to take this opportunity to tell the members in detail about the Electoral Boundaries Act, which we are proposing to help Ontarians continue to

have a strong voice and effective representation at Queen's Park. Following this, I will also explain a number of other measures that our government is considering to encourage greater public participation in the electoral process.

The legislation we are discussing today would build upon our government's work to strengthen Ontario's election system by ensuring that provincial ridings better reflect population movement and growth. If passed, the Electoral Boundaries Act would create 15 new ridings in southern Ontario. This adjustment will align with the federal electoral boundaries for southern Ontario that were put in place last year. Increasing the number of ridings in these areas will help ensure that this Legislature can better reflect the interests of these wonderfully diverse and flourishing regions. This is about representation by population, a core democratic principle.

We need to ensure that there is appropriate political representation in all parts of the province. Of course, the unique needs of communities in northern Ontario were an important consideration when we drafted this legislation. In 2005, our government made a commitment to support effective political representation in the North, and we intend to keep that promise. As a result, the 11 ridings in northern Ontario would stay the same, to ensure that northern communities continue to have effective representation in the Legislature.

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I would like to take this opportunity to tell the members about a few additional measures we are considering to strengthen our election system and to continue our legacy of progress and responsiveness to the changing needs and expectations of our citizens.

When we introduced the Electoral Boundaries Act, we also said we would move forward on other reforms, including the following: We will introduce rules that would allow the provisional registration of 16- and 17-year-olds. While the actual voting age would remain at 18, provisional registration could potentially allow for more meaningful engagement of young people. Later, when they turn 18, these young voters would begin receiving the same voter information as other adults on the electoral rolls. My hope is that they will be a bit more informed about the electoral process and a bit more likely to go to the polls than they otherwise would have been.

Finally, we will tackle the issue of third-party advertising. Ontario currently has rules in place to ensure transparency and free speech in our election campaigns. Third-party advertising rules were introduced in Ontario for the first time in 2007. Currently, third parties that spend \$500 or more on election advertising are required to register with the Chief Electoral Officer. They must also report to the Chief Electoral Officer on election advertising expenses. If election advertising expenses are \$5,000 or more, these reports must be audited.

As members may recall, in the most recent budget our government committed to strengthening the province's rules around election-related, third-party advertising. This will help ensure that we continue to protect the

public interest. Informed by the Chief Electoral Officer's report on the 2014 general election, we are now considering options for moving forward.

I think we can all agree that we believe in a just and fair society, a society that is inclusive and democratic. We know the importance of giving citizens the tools and resources they need to meaningfully participate in society. But Mr. Speaker, maintaining a democratic society does not just mean having a government that is willing to listen to what its people have to say; it must be willing to give people a megaphone through which to speak.

By adjusting electoral boundaries in southern Ontario and pursuing a number of other innovative, progressive electoral reforms, the proposed measures would help us build on the momentum our government has generated over the years.

I urge all members to support our proposed legislation for a stronger and more inclusive Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to recognize the member for Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I rise in the House today to continue debate on this important bill.

As the Attorney General noted earlier, this bill and some other proposals we're considering really get at the heart of the most cherished values we have as citizens of a democratic society—values like fairness and transparency, and the importance we place on progressiveness; the ability to participate, freely and without barriers, in decisions impacting our families, our businesses and our communities, decisions that influence the direction our society takes today and the future our children will inherit.

As some of the members will recall, in June the Premier reminded us of just how hard-earned this right of participation is; that it, in fact, took many decades of struggle before the right to vote was extended to every adult in Canada; and how today, as our society grows and evolves, it is up to us to ensure that our present-day laws continue to reflect those values upon which our province was founded.

As members are aware, last year the Chief Electoral Officer made a number of recommendations to government on different steps we could take to continue to strengthen the province's election system. Strengthening third-party advertising rules and undertaking provisional registration of 16- and 17-year-olds are just two of the innovations he suggested. He also made a number of excellent recommendations that our government has been considering since receiving his report earlier this year.

As the Attorney General explained, the focus of the bill before us today is about ensuring that provincial ridings better reflect population growth and movement. This, of course, responds to another key recommendation of Ontario's Chief Electoral Officer. As members are aware, over the past decade Ontario's population has grown rapidly in many areas of the province. This has resulted in a number of ridings with populations that are substantially greater than the provincial average.

To continue moving Ontario forward, we need to ensure there is appropriate political representation in all parts of the province. So, to ensure fair and appropriate representation of the people living in these areas, the Electoral Boundaries Act would create 15 new ridings in southern Ontario. The change will increase the total riding count in southern Ontario from 96 to 111.

Most of the new ridings would be in areas that have seen substantial population growth, such as Toronto, Peel, York, Durham and Ottawa, places more people are calling home. It includes Brampton, which has become one of the fastest-growing cities in Canada, and places like Ottawa, where a few years ago the Ottawa-Gatineau population outpaced the country's national growth.

The new electoral map would help ensure that this Legislature can better reflect the interests of these diverse and ever-expanding regions. This adjustment would align with the federal electoral boundaries for southern Ontario that were put in place last year. Indeed, a glance at the federal riding map currently in play for the October 19 federal election will allow you to see how our electoral landscape would look for southern Ontario come the next provincial election. These are the 111 ridings that were established through the decennial federal boundaries redistribution process, and the changes from the old map to the new map, including name changes, are the ones that we are proposing to make provincially.

Of course, that is where the similarity between our two maps ends. As some of the members may recall, in 2004, federal redistribution reduced the number of federal seats in northern Ontario from 11 to 10. We disagreed with that action, which would only serve to weaken northern representation. That would be a step in the wrong direction. That is why, later the following year, our government passed the Representation Act, 2005, which allows Ontario to keep that 11th northern seat. The step was a reflection of our government's commitment to support effective political representation in the North, and to ensure that people who live in those communities continue to have a strong voice in the provincial Legislature.

As the Attorney General noted earlier, we fully intend to stand by and honour that promise today. To quote my colleague the Honourable Michael Gravelle, Minister of Northern Development and Mines, "Economically and socially, the North represents a unique and vital part of Ontario." And so, through this bill, we are reaffirming our government's commitment to protecting representation in the North.

Should the Electoral Boundaries Act pass, Ontario will have 122 provincial ridings and 121 federal ridings. It is seemingly small, but it is a significant point of difference and change, one to be proud of.

Mr. Speaker, should this legislation pass, I should take this opportunity to clarify that the new electoral boundaries I have described wouldn't come into effect right away, but rather upon the first dissolution of the Legislative Assembly after November 30, 2016. This means that any by-election before the next dissolution of the Legislative Assembly would take place according to Ontario's current electoral map.

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The legislative measures and other electoral reform proposals that I've described here are very exciting. As you know well, Mr. Speaker, we can be a raucous bunch sometimes, so while to me the thought of 15 new members, 15 new colleagues and friends in the House, is quite an exhilarating one, you may want to get a larger mace to keep order, with the new members coming into this Legislature.

But with great sincerity, I would like to conclude today by once again urging the members to support the government's electoral boundaries legislation. Each of these measures the Attorney General and I described to you would help reinforce the province's strong democratic traditions and preserve our most cherished values as Ontarians. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I listened to both speakers on this bill. It was interesting. I heard at different times, I think two or three times by the Attorney General, and certainly by the member opposite, about listening to people. I wish they'd done that.

You know, it's hard to believe that they do listen to people because of what they have done in several other bills that they have passed in recent years. The Green Energy Act comes to mind, how they don't listen to people in rural Ontario over that, and certainly joint and several liability, which is something that over 200 municipalities supported: changes in the joint and several liability business. They didn't listen to that. They just said, "No, you're not right." And certainly the Hydro One sale is something that they're not listening to the people of Ontario about.

So I do have some suspicion that they listen to people, and certainly this bill—these changes that are going to mimic what the federal government is doing—has nothing really to do with listening to anybody. It's just that the federal government is doing it, so we're going to do it. That's about all it is. They continue to reject good comments from the people of Ontario all the time just for their own political means.

Anyway, the bill will be changing these boundaries. I'm very glad it's not touching my riding, because I do enjoy serving the people of Perth-Wellington, and we will be staying the same, although there are some ridings around me that are going to be changed.

I think people get comfortable with an MPP in their riding, and to change it around too often is not a good thing, although certainly in this case the changes are going to occur mostly in urban areas, and it's probably a good thing for those reasons. It's just that saying that they listen to the people of Ontario—it's certainly something they don't do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House and talk about the concerns of the people of Timiskaming-Cochrane—today on Bill 115,

the first true debate about changes to the Election Act. It's an interesting time to talk about the integrity of the Election Act, because we spend a lot of parts of question period talking about the Election Act.

I have a 20-minute space later this afternoon. A lot of people don't realize, and this act lays it out very well, that the boundaries in northern Ontario and southern Ontario don't follow the same rules. It's quite confusing, actually, for people who live in northern Ontario, because—

Hon. Liz Sandals: It's a good thing.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's a good thing. I'm not complaining, because we have—I think we'll all agree that provincially we have a lot more to do with constituents than federally. So we're not complaining.

My riding cuts across three federal ridings, so I have to deal with three federal MPs. So we do a lot more—and I am sure we've all had this: Someone will come into your office and they'll have an issue with government. But to them, they don't care if it's federal, provincial, or municipal. They really don't care. Regardless of party, in the North we have a pretty good rapport with each other to make sure that people don't get the runaround: "Well, this is a federal issue and you have to...", because especially in my riding, you've got three federal MPs. When you start trying to explain the boundaries, people get really confused, but it's something people have to keep in mind. If they took away one riding in northern Ontario, mine would be gone because mine doesn't exist federally. But it's—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: So you'd better support it.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm not saying I don't. I have my 20 minutes later and I'll bring up a couple of concerns regarding this bill, things that, hopefully, we can fix with this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Northumberland—Quinte West.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It is a pleasure to speak about this piece of legislation. Frankly, in my riding, when this comes into effect, it does impact it. One third of the riding goes towards the east, and two thirds of the riding goes sort of west and north. Speaker, I guess from a public perspective, I can tell you that since those new federal boundaries were established a couple of years ago or better, the common question was, "So is the province going to follow the same direction?" That mostly comes from municipal folks in agencies that we deal with, that we share responsibilities with. There was a time, when I first got elected in 2003, when part of the city of Quinte West belonged to a different riding, and that part made it a little bit confusing, even to the residents. That was certainly one of the most asked questions in the last couple of years: Would we follow this?

Frankly, since we started talking about this, I've been trying to get some unofficial feedback. I mean, I certainly didn't run any questionnaires or polls or those things, but when the subject comes up, if there's an interest from the party I'm talking to, I do pop the question, "So are you supportive of this?" The answer is, "Absolutely," because

if they've ever had any dealings with our local riding office, and our federal counterpart's office, it's always good to have that relationship. And I can say, municipalities were one of the biggest benefactors. I'm also delighted that we're making a decision to give an additional riding to the North because I did do a little bit of travel—not a lot—up in the North, I must admit. It is a vast piece of geography. Frankly, I don't know how some of those members do it. So I'm delighted that we're doing that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm glad to have a two-minute comment on the words from our Attorney General and the member from Scarborough Southwest. I was really interested, listening to the Attorney General's speech, when she started talking about fixing third-party advertising, so I ran down and grabbed a copy of the bill in case I missed something the first time I read through this. I read through it again, and for all the pomp and circumstance she made about fixing third-party advertising, there's not one lick of evidence in here that they're changing anything with regard to third-party advertising. I have no idea why she even commented on it when it has nothing to do with the bill.

It's quite disappointing considering how warped the system has become due to third-party advertising. They had their opportunity. They have this bill in front of us. They could have easily added it in. They didn't have to do any work to create this bill because the federal government did all the work for the last few years. They just mimicked what the federal government did, fixed what's going on in the North and implemented the bill. There is no work on their side of the House on this bill. So at the very least, they could have stepped forward and put their considerations into written paper and discussed how we could amend third-party advertising and make it fair for the people of Ontario. But they've missed this, and I don't understand why they talked about it if they're not even going to do anything about it. It's more bafflegab and bloviation as opposed to actually implementing what we can go forward with.

The other aspect which I thought was very interesting: They want to start collecting data and let 16- and 17-year-olds register, so they could have their name and help promote—I'm all for letting more voters occur in our government. However, I think a better option would be maybe looking at our school system, how we can fix the curriculum so that our kids, our children, our youth get a better education of how the system of government works and operates in this province. Even adults today don't have an understanding of the importance of voting, let alone how governments and elections operate. So maybe fixing the educational process would lend credence to continuing on with improving the voter turnout, especially in our youth.

1400

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Scarborough Southwest has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I listened very carefully to the comments made by the members from Perth–Wellington, Timiskaming–Cochrane, Northumberland–Quinte West and Elgin–Middlesex–London. I understand the points you're trying to make.

We've introduced a bill today—it's second reading; it's the start of the debate. We'll be listening to what the opposition has to say: the comments from both the Conservative Party and the NDP and what they propose should happen. We have listened to the public. We'll also listen here in the Legislature and we'll listen when it goes to committee, because that's when we invite the public to come in and listen to what they have to say and make submissions that may or may not change the bill.

The Attorney General has laid out a very simple strategy for changing the ridings, to bring it up to 122 members. That's an increase—because presently we have 107 members—of 15 members in this House. That's more representation. We all know that the population in Ontario has grown quite a bit, especially in some of the major cities—Toronto and Ottawa—and other areas of Ontario where the population has also increased. We are following what the federal government is doing. We are keeping one extra seat up north.

The main thing is to hear from the public, finish this debate, send it to committee, and then come back here for third reading and get this into law as soon as possible.

It's a very important bill. I think it allows for more public participation, with more members representing various parts of the province here in Ontario.

I look forward to more debate, and I'll be listening very carefully.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 115 today. It modifies three different pieces of legislation.

I'll be sharing my time with the honourable member from Kitchener–Conestoga, Mr. Harris, for this leadoff debate.

By and large, we're very much in agreement with this bill. Bill 115 does what many of us have long wanted the government to initiate: to keep those electoral districts aligned with our federal counterparts for the province of Ontario. I think it was a smart move when it was first implemented back in the 1990s under the Mike Harris government, where we mirrored the provincial ridings with the federal ridings. It has worked well. In my own situation, I can say that it certainly has helped individuals understand the levels of government, helped individuals understand what the different jurisdictions are, because there is not that confusion of overlapping, as the member from the third party mentioned in his discussion of sharing the same riding with three federal counterparts. It can add complexity and confusion for people. So we're glad to see that this happens.

The basis of it, of course, is that all votes ought to be equal in influence in a representative democracy. We can

see, at the present time, that our electoral districts have populations anywhere from 50,000 up to 150,000 registered voters. When you compare those two numbers, with some ridings as low as 50,000 and others up to 150,000, you can inherently see the unfairness in that. People who live in those very heavily populated ridings—their vote is not worth as much or as influential as much as people with lower numbers. The baseline is an acceptable baseline number, where the government is looking to achieve about 100,000 voters in each riding—in every electoral district. Although it's certainly unable to achieve that perfectly, it comes very close to achieving it, with the exception of our 11 ridings in northern Ontario, where geography just doesn't allow for effective representation, in my view, of 100,000 constituents in such sparsely populated and diverse geography.

I do want to mention that the government is revising three statutes: the Election Finances Act, the Legislative Assembly Act, as well as the Representation Act. Part of this bill, as we heard from the Attorney General and her parliamentary assistant, is to address inadequacies in our representation. We know that in the 2011 election, for the very first time in a general election, we had less than 50% of the people vote. I think we got up to 54% in the 2014 election—pretty dismal numbers. Nearly half the people of Ontario don't find any value in voting and sometimes greater than half the voters don't see any value. I do think this is a missed opportunity to alter these statutes by the Attorney General, and she could do a far more effective job in helping to address those dismal voter participation numbers.

As our health critic said, there is clearly a lack of interest placed on education in our province; of helping to educate our youth in understanding their role in a representative democracy, as well as the role of elected representatives. This was an opportunity that clearly could have been undertaken, if the Attorney General really was serious and had a commitment to improving voter participation.

This role of auditing—she mentioned changes to third-party advertising. Maybe if I could get the parliamentary assistant or the minister to listen for a minute—I would like this answered in the debates—where does this auditing of third-party expenditures over \$5,000 appear? I haven't seen it in the bill. It could very well be a proposed regulatory change, but I haven't seen it in the bill. It doesn't appear. It wouldn't surprise me if this government would make a regulatory change, because of course it doesn't require any discussion or debate in this House when they do a regulatory change.

There were comments about taking the Chief Electoral Officer's recommendations. I'm going to advance to the parliamentary assistant—he seems to be a little bit more interested in hearing this debate—that having a permanent voter ID would be a great thing to do. If we're going to amend these acts, let's look at having a permanent voter ID. Every member here who has been involved in a campaign—and we all have—knows the confusion, the troubles and the problems with our voters

lists because our voters lists are taken from MPAC records. Whenever people move, change locations or whatever, it causes significant difficulties. We always see people who are missed on voters lists, whose poll locations in rural Ontario are sent hours away. A permanent voter ID would be an effective mechanism to help solve that problem.

1410

I had one person the other day—and this is of course with the federal election—who dropped in to see me because their voting location is 45 minutes away from their home in rural Ontario. They actually have to drive past three other polling stations to get to the one that has been identified for them—45 minutes one way, 45 minutes back. If we want to improve voter participation, let's improve our lists, and having a permanent voter ID would be a significant way of achieving that.

I think also, when we're talking about improving the integrity of our act, improving voter participation, our elections have come into very significant disrepute as of late with the by-election in Sudbury. We're amending the Ontario Legislative Assembly Act. While we're doing that, we could clearly improve the language in that act to prevent wrongdoing from happening and put very clear language as to what would be a breach of the Ontario Election Act when it comes to offering inducements and other favours when it comes to by-elections such as what has happened in Sudbury.

I think it's also important, while we're addressing that Legislative Assembly Act, that there has been a host of motions introduced in this House over the years to improve our representative democracy. If anybody on the Liberal side cares to pick up the orders and notices paper today, you'll see a whole series of motions in there. They've actually been in there for a couple of years. They were first introduced in the previous Parliament before the minority Parliament fell. I know they're there because a number of them are mine, and they're all to do with modifications to our standing orders and the Legislative Assembly Act, to improve representation in this House.

I could read a few of them. To ensure that regulations do not make unusual or unexpected delegations of power—that motion, motion number 39, was passed by the regulations and private bills committee back in 2013, and it still languishes on the Orders and Notices paper two years later—passed, adopted by one of our standing committees of the House, and nothing has happened. I'm not going to read them all, Speaker, but I do encourage members on the other side to take a look at some of those motions.

Another one that this House has struggled with is the motion to allow electronic petitions to be delivered in this House. There are members in this House who are on that committee, who heard hours and hours and hours of agonizing discussion and debate over electronic petitions. I see the member from Newmarket–Aurora who was in that committee. We heard from expert witnesses, but indeed the government continues to fail the people of this

province by preventing people from using technology to be engaged with their representatives and to be engaged with this Legislative Assembly.

There are 20 or 30 motions that have been tabled in this House. Many of them have been adopted and approved by standing committees, but still this government refuses to take action.

Also, Speaker, they're opening up the Election Finances Act—and thankfully; it's very important. Again, I hope that the parliamentary assistant will provide information to us about where this auditing mechanism is included in the bill.

But what about not just mirroring our electoral riding associations with the federal government; how about mirroring our election financing laws? As we know, in the federal government, only individuals can contribute to campaigns and to candidates. Businesses and unions are prevented from using their money to influence a federal campaign.

That's not the case here in Ontario, of course. In Ontario, we're just about the Wild West when it comes to allowing unions and businesses—and individuals, as well—to use their financial domination, their financial positions, to influence our actions in this Legislature. Tens of thousands of dollars can easily be funnelled to any candidate or any party at any time under our election financing rules in this province.

If the government really and truly had conviction and commitment to improving representation, that would be one of the first, if not foremost, amendments that they would do in the Election Finances Act, which is being amended by this legislation. I think it is reasonable, it is simple, it is practical and it is consistent with our understanding that our assembly, our Parliament, is for the people. We are here to represent people, not businesses, corporations and unions that have significant amounts of financial resources to use to influence legislation and public policy.

For that matter, I'll speak shortly, briefly, about the recall amendment act that I introduced. Again, if we had a truly honest conviction to improving representation, openness and accountability—every Liberal member spoke out against and voted against a bill in this House two weeks ago that would have allowed people to initiate a recall process. That was struck down.

Referendums: That's not part of this bill. It's not part of the discussion. This Liberal government has cherry-picked one element of federal jurisdiction, the riding redistribution, and has promoted it as the big safeguard, to demonstrate how big their hearts are and what a commitment they have to representative democracy. They've cherry-picked one element. It's an important one, one that I agree with, but there's far, far more that could be done if we truly wanted to see more than under half the people actually vote.

That's a condemnation on all of us in this House, in my view. When we have a general election, and nearly half the people say it's not worth getting off the couch to go and vote, that's a condemnation on us. It's a con-

demnation on this House that so many people see so little value in us. And it's not going to change by us doing the same things. We're not doing anything different. That trend line has been happening for a number of decades now. One day, we need to wake up. I would have thought it would have been in 2011, when for the first time in our history, more people stayed at home on the couch than bothered to go out to vote. That was a wake-up call, I think, or should have been a wake-up call to all of us. It should have been a clarion call to action for all members of this House when we saw those numbers.

1420

Recall, referendums, election financing reform, improving the integrity of our Election Act with better language, improving education of our youth in both elementary and secondary schools—I have gone to a number of classes to do civics classes in my community, and it is astonishing just how little effort is put forth in our education system to explain the value, the purpose and the responsibilities of elected members.

I will say that we're all here to safeguard that public interest. We safeguard the public interest by our debate and by our discussions. We do that by representing this very diverse—both geographically and demographically—province. It is important, it is essential, that the members in this House represent their constituents in their areas in the most forthright manner they can, but also by having the most effective and practical tools at our disposal to do so, such as those motions to amend the standing orders, motions such as allowing petitions and allowing regulations to be scrutinized, analyzed and evaluated by all members in this House.

In closing, I want to say to the Attorney General: I am glad you have done it, this bill. It's unfortunate you only did a little sliver of things that need to be done. I do think most members in this House will agree that there are failings, there are faults in our system, and that they could and can be corrected in a non-partisan fashion, with agreement, if they chose to, if they thought it was important, if they thought the desires and wishes of their constituents were more important than just the edicts from the corner office. If we did that, we would make this House a far more effective House, a far more valuable House, a House such that maybe more than 50% of the people would find value in going out and legitimizing our office.

I think those are important considerations. I do hope the Attorney General and the parliamentary assistant have listened and will take those words. Those words are offered in sincerity. They are offered with honesty, not in a partisan fashion. Permanent voters' ID would save people a lot of grief. It would also save all of us a lot of grief every campaign, as well, but more importantly, it would save people a lot of grief. And I am going to listen for the parliamentary assistant to offer up that information, so we can see where this auditing process comes in with this bill.

With that, I'm going to turn it over to the member from Kitchener–Conestoga.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Kitchener–Conestoga has the floor.

Mr. Michael Harris: Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity today to speak to Bill 115. I have had the opportunity to catch the leadoff—the short leadoff that it was—from the government on Bill 115, and, of course, the comments from our critic the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. A major interest of his is electoral reform, democracy, ensuring that Ontarians get all sorts of abilities to have their say when necessary. As the member did refer just a few weeks ago, the member put forward a recall bill that many of us supported here; unfortunately, the government didn't, perhaps for self-interest, I would say.

Nevertheless, the Electoral Boundaries Act, 2015, an act that, as we have heard, will, if passed, enact the Representation Act, 2015, while repealing the Representation Act, 2005, and amending the Election Finances Act and the Legislative Assembly Act, for those who didn't already know—specifically, this bill will help Ontario move towards shifting electoral boundaries set in recent years by the federal government in Ottawa in response to population shifts and growth throughout the nation.

The redrawn federal election map has changed approximately 87% of federal ridings. A number of them are in my area. Certainly, as we have seen over the years, when the feds redraw, it's time for legislators in Ontario to get out their boundary markers to follow suit. Federal decisions to readjust boundaries aren't taken lightly and are a direct response to shifts in population that our nation experiences over years and decades of growth.

Quite simply, the readjustments are based on criteria aimed at ensuring population equality so that the population of an electoral district in a given province comes as close as possible to the average population size of a district for that province. In addition, there are a few other considerations that go into the decision-making around where the lines are to be drawn, including the application of special clauses as well as the representation rule. Special clauses go into effect after the initial number of seats per province is obtained, allowing for adjustments to be made to account for the senatorial clause and the grandfather clause.

The senatorial clause guarantees that no province has fewer seats in the House of Commons than it has in the Senate, while the grandfather clause guarantees that each province will have no fewer seats than it had in 1985. As I noted earlier, the final step is the application of the representation rule, which only applies to a province whose population was overrepresented in the House of Commons at the completion of the last redistribution process. In cases where such a province would be underrepresented based on the previous calculations, it will be given extra seats so that its share of the House of Commons is proportional to its share of the population. For those at home, I'm hoping you're following along with that. That's about it, Speaker.

When all was said and done, following the last federal adjustment that we are looking to mirror, it meant 15 new

ridings and adjustments to many more. It meant that Ontario will now boast 121 members on Parliament Hill, which comes in at approximately 36% of the total representation in Ottawa.

In my area, the federal changes and, by extension, the related provincial changes that this bill calls for today created a lot of shifting, including two specific new ridings—or rather, one with some new names: Kitchener South–Hespeler and Waterloo—as well as small adjustments to their new neighbours.

Here's how the boundaries break down for the people in Waterloo region. I'll begin with one of the two new ridings that take in part of my current riding of Kitchener–Conestoga. The new riding of Kitchener South–Hespeler encompasses the south end of Kitchener as well as the north end of Cambridge. It is made up of chunks from the ridings of Kitchener–Conestoga, Cambridge and a small piece from Kitchener Centre. Specifically, it will mean a larger urban riding created from a riding that I've been proud to serve and represent, encompassing both rural and urban areas. The rural areas and townships will remain as Kitchener–Conestoga, as Kitchener South–Hespeler encompasses the urban centre shared between Kitchener and Cambridge. Further, the changes mean the creation of a younger riding whose median age of 36 is the lowest in Ontario outside the GTA.

1430

For those familiar with the area, the new riding is bounded by Highway 401 and New Dundee Road to the south, Fischer–Hallman Road to the west, the Conestoga Parkway, King Street bypass and Fairway Road to the north, and the Waterloo region's eastern boundaries to the east.

Our other new federal riding is now known as Waterloo. It's a riding previously known as Kitchener–Waterloo that has been shrunk slightly on the south end of its border.

Other changes that the province is looking to mirror with Bill 115 include some small adjustments to Kitchener Centre and Cambridge. Kitchener Centre, which has long encompassed most of central Kitchener, would shrink slightly from the west and south ends and grow slightly to the north. Kitchener–Conestoga, which I represent and referenced earlier, would continue to encompass much of Waterloo region's rural townships, but as I mentioned earlier, would shrink to accommodate Kitchener South–Hespeler. At the same time, Kitchener–Conestoga would expand slightly into Kitchener Centre and Waterloo's former western territory.

Finally, Speaker, Cambridge, which covers Cambridge south of Highway 401 and the township of North Dumfries, would expand south into the county of Brant while losing a north end to Kitchener South–Hespeler.

With regard to the shifts in Cambridge, I will say that not all changes come without some controversy. It does seem that the new Kitchener South–Hespeler has opened up some old wounds in Cambridge when it comes to historical names. Former ward 4 Cambridge city

councillor Ben Tucci said the new federal riding and what we are proposing here for the new provincial riding have an alienating name that may affect voter turnout. Those familiar with the area will know of the history surrounding the marriage of Hespeler, Preston and Galt to create the municipality we now know as Cambridge. Tucci noted when the changes were first proposed that, “We’ve been attempting now for many years to get over this Hespeler–Preston–Galt mentality.

“Moves like this tend to alienate people and the public and I wouldn’t be surprised if that section of our city has a low voter turnout.” He suggested a new Kitchener South–Cambridge North—maybe next time around, Speaker.

When it comes down to it, redistribution and riding boundary shifts are all about improving and strengthening our democracy. It's about making sure that government is working at all times to do what it can to maintain the truest representation of the people that our democratic system is meant to serve. Whether it's considering changes to the first-past-the-post system, as have been proposed by many over the years—including reference by the Attorney General in her leadoff that in 2007 it was taken to the people in a referendum and clearly they spoke that they would want the status quo—changing boundaries, or working to ensure the say of the people takes precedence over government dictates, we must always ensure that the cornerstones of our democratic system hold strong.

It is these principles that spurred me to raise my voice locally when it came to Waterloo region's consideration of options to deal with a seat vacancy that followed the passing of regional councillor and former Ontario MPP Wayne Wettlaufer. While the decision-making did not encompass any boundary riding changes, the principles of democracy that I discussed at that time are the very same principles at the heart of the decision-making we are considering today.

As a two-term MPP, Wayne Wettlaufer left behind a strong legacy as an accountable representative, advocate of community engagement and defender of democracy. Unfortunately, we lost Wayne Wettlaufer this past summer. We remember Wayne not only in the community of the region of Waterloo, his riding of Kitchener Centre here in the Legislature—of course, Wayne was a strong advocate for German pioneers in the region of Waterloo, enacting a bill to actually recognize German Pioneers Day. We'll be celebrating that in the coming weeks as Kitchener–Waterloo hosts Kitchener–Waterloo's Oktoberfest. I think it will be extra special this year for sure.

But much as Wayne himself indicated in the Ontario Legislature back on June 25, 2001, “We cannot be democratic if we do not give people a choice,” it's clear that without choice there is no democracy. It was that point that I felt was key to the local decision or discussion on the region's vacancy. It is also key to our discussions today, as we work to ensure that people are given that choice in a way that best reflects the will of the people in our many diverse areas and ridings across Ontario and across Canada.

With regard to the municipal decision, I continue to feel it is essential, going forward, as both the Municipal Act and the Municipal Elections Act have been opened up for review, that the province give better direction on council vacancy rules. The province must always work to ensure that when the decision is between the elected council dictating through appointment versus allowing the electorate the democratic freedom of choice, the right to vote for our representatives remains paramount.

Of course, if we took the same situation of seat vacancy from a provincial or federal perspective, there would be an outcry at the offence to the democratic process should Queen's Park or Ottawa suggest appointing a non-elected member. I think the question has to be asked as to why the same principle shouldn't hold true within municipalities. We will have to wait and see whether that question will be answered and democracy is served in the ongoing municipal review.

Today we will work to ensure that questions surrounding representation and boundary shifts are answered through the lens of upholding the principles of democracy that we are all here to serve. I think most of us here today can agree that Bill 115 does that by reflecting growth, declines and population shifts so that MPPs bear an equal representation as they work on behalf of the people of Ontario.

Now, as we are all aware, we are actually in an election federally—election 42, I believe. Voters will be subject to those boundaries on October 19. And I can tell you, Speaker, as I'm sure many MPPs have, that speaking to constituents, they're frequently getting asked questions about the fact that they were unaware that the boundaries had changed. I know that our federal cousins are out campaigning now. In some areas, they believe they're voting to re-elect their current incumbent, and in fact they're going to have four to five to six new names on the ballot this time around.

So I think it's imperative, as we go through this process—obviously Ontario will have an example to follow in October, but it's of course up to the government to educate voters that come 2018—it can't come soon enough—the boundaries will reflect the new boundaries set out federally and those ridings per se in my region of Waterloo will remain just about the same.

I know there are some differences in the north, as my colleague recently stated. If there weren't, his electoral district wouldn't exist. So there are a few changes, obviously, but I think it goes to the point that the government needs to make a strong effort to educate people leading up to the 2018 election. Maybe they can run a few non-partisan commercials leading into the next election to tout something instead of their own, perhaps, political agenda.

Before I finish up here, I would remind members that while we are considering the benefits of boundary change, the decisions we are contemplating trace their roots back to the origins of this country. Ever since the conception of Upper and Lower Canada, we have had debates and considerations over how and where to draw

boundaries and create ridings to ensure the best system of representation right across our nation.

I recall when the commission was set up to review the boundaries for the upcoming election. There were several models that lumped townships like Wilmot and Wellesley with Stratford areas. You know what? We had Cambridge lumped in with Brant. But, reflecting the growth of the Waterloo region, I think they've got the best geographical lines drawn out. Of course there are some concerns down in Cambridge, with Hespeler as part of the new riding name.

1440

One quick fact: My current riding is Kitchener-Conestoga and yet one of the communities I represent is actually Conestogo. Of course, I am sure they're referring to the old Conestoga wagon. But just a little bit of a fun fact for folks today that, although my riding name is Kitchener-Conestoga, I have a small community in my riding, Conestogo, which is spelled with an O, not an A.

The Fathers of Confederation, in 1867, spent much time and effort—and a lot of debate—over how to create equal representation in the House of Commons of Canada, time guaranteeing that each region of the country had a fair say in the daily workings of the new federation. The idea of representation by population meant each province was allotted a number of seats that directly corresponded to its proportion of the total population in relation to Quebec's. It was around this principle that the formula of distributing the number of seats in the House of Commons among the provinces was originally designed.

Of course, with growth, as we see today, came more questions as to how to guarantee the best representation for the people of all provinces and territories. As more provinces entered Confederation and as some regions grew and developed more than others, a certain degree of compromise had to be built into the formula. Again, it is the centuries-old legacy from the decisions and discussions that have been taken on by representatives across Canada in the years since 1867 that brings us to the considerations we are debating today as put forward by the Electoral Boundaries Act, 2015.

While it is a historical debate and one that will be repeated in the future as our country grows and populations shift, I feel it is important that we work to move this specific debate forward as government proposes to follow the new federal map to improve democracy across Ontario, as it has across Canada.

I'll finish my remarks at that. For those in attendances today and those watching at home, I encourage all to come out on October 19 and have their democratic say and vote.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to add some comments here in response to the shared lead from our Conservative colleagues. This is speaking on Bill 115, An Act to enact the Representation Act, 2015, repeal the

Representation Act, 2005 and amend the Election Act, the Election Finances Act and the Legislative Assembly Act. It sounds like it's doing a lot, Mr. Speaker.

To some of the points made by the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington and the member from Kitchener–Conestoga, this is a proposal that's going to change boundaries to match the federal boundaries, with a few exceptions in our ridings up north. I think one of the positive things that's going to come out of this, hopefully, is to minimize some confusion. We want to engage our constituents. We want to engage our friends and neighbours and make sure that they are voting, that they are engaging in our democratic process.

To that point of confusion: I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, when I ran in the last provincial election, the boundaries of my Oshawa riding were just so, and that was my riding. Now we find ourselves, as you may have heard, in a federal election. In this federal election, of course, the boundaries are different. Well, coming up—and it will be determined, soon I suppose, when the by-election for my neighbouring riding Whitby–Oshawa is going to happen. Those individuals who live in the Whitby–Oshawa riding—that section of Oshawa that has come back to Oshawa federally—will be voting in the Oshawa boundaries federally. Then they're going to be back in the Whitby–Oshawa boundaries provincially, and then they're going to switch, we'll see, in the next provincial—if I've confused you, imagine how our voters are feeling.

I think that this really does come down to improving representation, and we're glad that there will be some help towards that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to speak in support of Bill 115. As you know, this particular proposed legislation, if passed, will mean an additional 15 new seats here in the southern part of Ontario. For the city of Toronto, there's so much growth. My neighbour here from Trinity–Spadina could tell you: On every corner of his riding, there's a condominium. Maybe about 2,000 to 5,000 people live in one building. Just in one building alone there are probably thousands of potential voters.

With regard to this proposed legislation, if passed, there will be additional members of this chamber, but more importantly, it will provide fair representation and make sure there will be more inclusiveness of representation. I know my colleague the Minister of Community and Social Services could tell you that in her riding there are over 250,000 constituents. That represents maybe an entire province for some smaller provinces. It is very important that the proposed legislation needs to go forward.

Also for our colleagues in northern Ontario, in the explanatory note, it is very clear: The Attorney General very clearly stated that there are 11 northern electoral districts, the first established back in 1996, almost 20 years ago.

So it's very, very clear: We need to reflect the change and the growth of this great province of Ontario and we need to make sure there is good representation and also fair representation. It isn't fair when we have members, like my Minister of Community and Social Services, with over 250,000 constituents and others have X number. It's very, very important that we have strong representation but, more importantly, a fair and inclusive society represented here in the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: It is my pleasure to address the speeches made by the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington and the member from Kitchener–Conestoga on Bill 115, An Act to enact the Representation Act, 2015.

Mr. Speaker, as you've heard, this bill—since the latest federal electoral boundary change—aligns Ontario's ridings for the next election with those newly created ridings. Of course, we've had a population increase in Ontario, so the number of ridings will be going up by some 15 ridings. As was pointed out by the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, it was Mike Harris, back in 1999, that made the Ontario provincial ridings match the federal ridings. That is fairly unique in the country.

I want to get to one point that the member made that I thought was a really good idea, and that's the idea of having a permanent voter ID card or a permanent voter list. I think we have all experienced at election time that the lists are just—generally, they're a mess. If you happen to go walk up to a house on the street, there are usually eight names listed and two that might actually be living in that particular residence. I think it is a good idea, especially with the point the member was making with regard to trying to increase voter turnout. He pointed out that less than 50% of people actually voted in the last election. I think that's an idea that has merit and should be considered—some sort of voter ID card or permanent voter ID. Perhaps it would be the individual's responsibility, as it is with your driver's licence: If you switch residences, you change your voter ID card and just keep it up to date. It would probably be a lot more accurate that way.

I can see, Mr. Speaker, that I'm out of time, so I won't make the other points I wanted to make.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to stand in this House.

I'd like to make some comments on the members from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington and also Kitchener–Conestoga regarding Bill 115. They both brought forward interesting issues.

I listened intently about voter turnout going down, and that's something that we all face. Sometimes, it almost seems like it's on purpose, that occasionally political parties seem to do things to drive down the vote. That's

something that we should all be cognizant of and should all try to stop.

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Others brought forward that the voting lists are a mess. I think it's scary how big a mess they are. It is not just provincial; it's also federal.

I'll give you an example from this federal election. Someone called the office—because they live in the same house on a boundary road, a couple. One got a card to vote in one riding, and the other, living in the same house, got a card from the other riding. They called the Elections Canada office and they were told, "Well, where you live it's kind of murky, so just pick where you want to vote." In this riding, in the last federal election, the difference between first and second was 18 votes, yet these people are told that it's kind of murky. That was later fixed when not just one party but several parties complained.

But if you think about it, in a country like ours, the democratic right to vote is very important, and for it to be taken that lackadaisically—it's the first time I've used that word here. And it is. We make complaints every election, and the next election comes around and nothing has been fixed. We've got to address that, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): One of the opposition members can now reply. I'll look to the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington to respond.

Mr. Randy Hillier: It was actually a pleasure to listen to the members who listened to the debate and then commented, as compared to the ones who didn't listen and then just made a statement, like the member from Scarborough-Agincourt.

I had asked the parliamentary assistant—or the minister—to respond to my question about this assertion by the minister that this bill would alter the third-party election advertising act. In their two-minute rebuttal, of course, they didn't. One of the reasons to have debate and have the questions-and-comments portion is that, when there is a lack of clarity or a requirement for further clarification, the members can offer that clarity. It's unfortunate that neither the minister nor the parliamentary assistant took an opportunity to clarify the questions that were posed on this side of the House. Instead, they just stood up with a talking point, a scripted response, about how great the bill is.

We're in favour of the bill. We're in favour; that's what it was all about. We've said very clearly that we're in favour of changing the riding boundaries. I haven't heard anybody opposed to it, and I'm sure I won't. What we were asking for are some of these other things, as well as offering up further suggestions and recommendations that the government could contemplate and consider incorporating in these statutes that they're revising—the Legislative Assembly Act, the Election Finances Act—such as permanent voter ID and significant changes to our election finance reform.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I'm pleased to recognize the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: Before I begin, I believe we have unanimous consent for our party to stand down our lead.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Timiskaming-Cochrane is, I believe, seeking unanimous consent to allow the New Democrats to stand down their lead. Agreed? Agreed.

Again, I turn to the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's once again an honour to be able to stand and speak in this House regarding an act that affects the people of my riding and affects the people of the province, and this act—as do others—does. As people who have the privilege to sit in this House, we perhaps look on it differently because we deal with politics on a daily basis. We deal with the results of elections on a daily basis in a much more hands-on manner. But for people whose interaction with politics and with democracy is voting, it comes in short bursts—sometimes too long a burst, but short bursts every three or four years. And so I tried to, as I was thinking about the comments on this bill—and the majority of this bill is about changing boundaries, and we're in favour; we're not going to say we're not in favour—to look at this from the point of view of the voter.

Firstly, I'm going to focus on my own riding for a few minutes. In northern Ontario, the ridings don't follow the federal boundaries. There's a good reason: Because people deal with provincial issues much more than federal issues, I find—I think we all find. So as ridings get bigger and bigger, it's harder and harder to actually serve the public. To their credit, the government of the day decided to hold the number of ridings in northern Ontario at 11. We agree with that. We fully support keeping it at 11. We'd like to put it up to 20, but we realize that the population doesn't merit that.

Just to clarify how things work in our part of the world—and I listened to some of the comments from the government's side about how a member had 250,000 people in their riding; and that is an incredible responsibility. If you take a riding like mine, I have about 70,000. I live in the centre of my riding, and I have five towns, five communities of interest; and to get to the northernmost, it's three hours, and to get to the southernmost, it's three hours. There is no public transportation, so it's very hard. A lot of these people don't even have Internet. It's very hard. So it's not the number. Again, I'm not downplaying the number, but you have to look at both sides, and that's why it's good that we're keeping some northern ridings.

I would like to suggest that as I read—and it's not often that Timiskaming-Cochrane gets mentioned in a bill specifically, but in this one, because it's riding boundaries, of course it gets mentioned specifically. It lays out the boundaries of Timiskaming-Cochrane. I had the opportunity this morning to talk to the member for Nipissing, who shares a boundary with me, and the member for Nickel Belt, who also shares a boundary with me. We would like to make some changes, from a voter perspective.

My riding kind of wishbones around North Bay. I have two small villages in my riding, Thorne and Eldee. We do our best to serve Thorne and Eldee, but the only way that they can get to my constituency office is to either drive through Quebec or drive right past the member for Nipissing's constituency office and go another hour to my closest one. Those people are not being served as they should. Their community of interest is not in Timiskaming-Cochrane. Their community of interest is in Nipissing. We do our best to service them, and I'm sure the member from Nipissing also services them, because that's the way we are in northern Ontario. Lots of times between elections, parties don't really mean a lot. People want service and we try to provide it. But the people in Thorne and Eldee would be better served if they were in the riding of Nipissing; that is their community of interest. That could be done here.

Another one would be, on the other side of my riding, the Wahnapiatae First Nation. They're on the other side of Lake Wanapitei. I have to drive through, again, another riding to get there, but so do they. Actually, we were talking to the member for Nickel Belt this morning. They are 10 minutes from the member for Nickel Belt's constituency office and, we calculated this morning, about five hours from mine. Again, if we are going to the time to change the boundaries—and I'm not saying we eliminate; we need the 11. But to serve the people, from the point of view of the people we serve, those two changes would make sense.

1500

I know them from my riding. I'm sure that changes like that could be made in a lot of places, and I think we should be cognizant—and in this case, in my riding, the roads just don't exist. When you draw a nice map and on one corner you have got Lake Wanapitei and you just put it on the other side of Lake Wanapitei, there's no road to get there unless you go through other ridings. In the case of Thorne, the quickest way for me to get there is through another province. Their community of interest—they're very close to North Bay.

That's the first thing that I had to talk about today: that those people would be much better served by the province of Ontario if a couple of small changes were made. That's the top-of-mind issue for me. As I was reading Bill 115, I thought, "Okay; if my constituents were reading it"—I'm reading on their behalf, but if they were reading it—"what would be the first thing they would say sticks out?" For the people of Thorne and the people of Wanapitei, that's the first thing that sticks out.

Something that this bill doesn't talk a lot about but we need to, while we're talking about elections, is that we need to fix the voters list. If we're actually going to have a serious discussion about improving democracy and improving the right to vote, we need to do something about the voters list. A Mr. Johnston came into my office, and he was quite upset because he has lived in the same house for 65 years-plus and voted in the same place. There was a poll there, but he was told to vote someplace else. Again, things like that. We are worried about

detrerring people from voting, and every time that we do something like that, it, in its own way, deters people from voting.

In a past federal election, there was the Pierre Poutine robocall scandal. In my part of the world, we don't need robocalls; we have the voters list. It deters enough people. That is the problem. We don't need robocalls.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: The NDP people do everything they can. They show up and vote, and that's why I'm here.

Seriously, in this day and age—and I don't know what the best vehicle would be; with all our technological capabilities, you would think that we could come up with an accurate voters list, and somehow we can't. We're following the federal boundaries in most of the province; fine. We're going through a federal election now. My office is getting lots of calls, and we send them through because it's a political issue. People close to Englehart, in Evanturel township, my old home township, have voted in Englehart forever. It's about five miles. There are still polls in Englehart, but now they have to go to Harley township, which is 20 miles. Does that make any sense? No. Why, you ask? That's a good question. Why?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I blame Kathleen Wynne.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's a federal election. I'm not going to blame anyone in the province, but it's a huge issue.

A lot of people—and this might not be a popular subject today—in rural Ontario, in northern Ontario, feel a bit threatened by the population changes, by the number of seats, because a lot of people already feel very isolated and feel that the government is in many cases out of touch. You hear this all the time in northern and rural Ontario. I think we are going to have to, as the province become more urbanized and as the Legislature becomes more urbanized—which it's going to become; I don't think anyone can deny that. That's what is going to happen. You are going to get more urban representation in the Legislature.

We have to be very cognizant that the rural voice doesn't get even more forgotten. In my four years here, my biggest challenge hasn't been to be able to talk to other MPPs, to be able to talk to ministers—it hasn't been a challenge. My biggest challenge is being able to get people to understand what happens in rural Ontario, what the differences are. When I go home to talk to people, I explain that, "Well, it would be like us sitting in Tim Hortons in New Liskeard and running Toronto. I think we'd screw it up." A lot of times, Queen's Park does the same thing to people in rural Ontario; they don't understand.

A lot of times—and I say this over and over and over—we come up with regulations that make sense here and make sense on paper, but they don't work on the ground. And if the regulations don't work, then everyone's kidding themselves. I think that's something where, as we get more urban representation in the Legislature, the voice of the people of rural Ontario is going to be

even more drowned out. That is something we are going to have to be very cognizant of. Somehow, we're going to have to make some different type of structure to represent rural Ontario or represent northern Ontario, because when there is enough electoral base in one part of the province to control the province continually, it's not a balanced government. And this isn't a partisan thing. This isn't a party thing that I'm talking about right now. I think all parties, if they were in government and had a majority of representation from only one part of the province, would run into that problem.

So that is something that we're going to have to be cognizant of. I don't know; I don't have any idea how to fix it right now. We proposed a northern committee for MPPs. I think that would be a start: a nonpartisan northern committee to be able to review bills, just to make sure that when the rubber hits the road on the ground, they actually work. Because what you are going to see—and we see it now with some of the farming communities. They are hitting back. On the neonics debate, the government has taken the decision to make that their goal, and that's their right, but they also have the obligation to make sure that the regulations they implement are going to work, and they haven't fulfilled that obligation. You haven't.

You didn't fill that with the Endangered Species Act, because a lot of those things actually hurt the species. The intention is not there, but a lot of things work on paper but don't work unless you really sit down and talk to the people who deal with those issues every day. On neonics, I'll give you an example. I might get all kinds of people in trouble, but you can ban neonics-treated seed, and what is going to happen is that people are going to spray a lot more neonic spray, and you are actually going to hurt your cause instead of help it.

Under these regulations—no, I'm going to go back to Bill 115, I think, before the Speaker or somebody else—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I think it's relevant.

Mr. John Vanthof: Oh, so do I, but I've got a few other issues about Bill 115.

Since people want to get me back on election mode, I'm going to go on election mode. Something that deters people from voting and drives down voter turnout and actually hurts our democratic process—

Mr. Jeff Yurek: NDP attack ads.

Mr. John Vanthof: —is MPP attack ads.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: No, NDP.

Mr. John Vanthof: NDP attack ads, no—is scandal, constant scandal.

Interjection: NDP scandals.

Mr. John Vanthof: I don't know. I don't know about too many NDP scandals, but it's an issue. It's a big issue.
1510

People get frustrated. You hear in the street that people say, "Why bother voting? They're all the same anyway." I don't think that's true, because in my four years here, I have spoken and worked with—I believe we're all honourable members, and we all try to do our job. But that's not coming through in the public realm,

because the way that partisan politics sometimes operates is not very good for the democratic process. We're going to have to somehow go further than just changing the boundaries and changing a few rules. We're also going to have to do quite a bit better at trying to respect the rules and enforce the rules.

Our goal here has got to be to get more people to participate in politics, get more people to participate in democracy. It's something that we don't appreciate enough, because most of us were born in a democratic country. Lots of our parents weren't, and some of us weren't. Sometimes when something is given to you, you don't appreciate what you have. For most of us, democracy was given to us. It wasn't given to our forefathers—it wasn't. They worked for it. Many died for it. But for the majority of us, it was given to us. It would be very sad if we let it get to the point where so many people believed it wasn't working for them that, in effect, we lost it in a way. Because when democracy is controlled by funders, we lose it, in a way.

Democracy should be for people, for the average person—average, but for everyone. Business needs help from government, but I truly believe that business—big business and small business—can take care of themselves. It's the people who need to be ably represented. I think that changing these boundaries—we're not against that, but there are all kinds of other things in democracy that we're going to have to be very cognizant of to make sure we all do the best job we can to represent the people of Ontario—all the people of Ontario.

I'm going to take my last minute to reiterate my point about the people in Thorne and Eldee and the Wahnapiatae First Nation. In my first campaign, I had no idea that there were parts of that riding that you couldn't even get to. Now, that does not make sense. Again, it makes sense in here. It's a nice line in here: this township, that township, that township. But from a people perspective, it doesn't make sense, and I think we have to look very strongly from a people perspective. So if we could make a couple of little changes in other ridings, especially in northern ridings—I'm sure it exists all over. We should have a look and see if we can do a couple of non-partisan things that would actually make a big difference in a few people's lives, and then we will have done our job.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Merci, monsieur le Président, and I would like to say thank you to the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane for his insightful idea and suggestion.

Certainement pour moi, qui représente la circonscription d'Ottawa-Orléans, c'est tout un honneur de parler de ce projet de loi qui a été déposé ici, parce que quand on regarde la démocratie et, souvent, une croissance qui a eu lieu depuis les derniers 10 ans, je crois que ce projet de loi vient arrimer un petit peu ce qui se passe au niveau du fédéral, au niveau des nouvelles démarcations. Je pense que c'est important pour moi,

comme députée provinciale, de travailler en collaboration avec la personne qui va représenter mon comté, ma circonscription, au niveau fédéral.

Orléans, depuis les dernières années, a eu une augmentation de population de façon très significative, donc il est certain que pour moi, lorsque je regarde à représenter le mieux possible les gens de ma circonscription, ça veut dire d'être présente et de pouvoir amener leurs idées ici à Queen's Park.

En changeant un petit peu les démarcations et les frontières—il est certain que si je peux aller même sur une rue, souvent ça se retrouve que de l'autre côté de la rue, c'est mon collègue, pour qui j'ai beaucoup de respect, mais, logistiquement parlant, il ne fait plus aucun sens que ça soit lui qui les représente.

Donc, je pense qu'amener cette nouvelle démarcation, encore une fois, demande notre engagement, au niveau démocratique, de démontrer notre engagement de travailler avec le fédéral, mais aussi de travailler pour les gens que nous représentons.

Ça me fait plaisir aujourd'hui, monsieur le Président, de vous parler un petit peu sur ce projet de loi que j'espère mes collègues vont tous accepter.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Merci beaucoup. The member for Nepean—Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my great pleasure to rise for debate today, for at least two minutes, to talk about the bill before us, which talks about electoral reform and the new riding boundaries for the 2018 election, those that are currently being engaged upon and fought upon in the 42nd federal election in Canada.

I'd like to thank my colleague from Timiskaming—Cochrane for taking the time to debate his points. He made a few comments with respect to the rural-urban divide, and in his case the northern and rest-of-Ontario divide—I choose to talk about it as the rural-urban divide and it actually was in order, I thought. Those comments were really relevant to the discussion that we're having today in terms of the new electoral boundaries in the province of Ontario, and federally in Canada, because I do sense that there is a great and deepening divide that we must start to consider and concern ourselves with.

That said, my constituency of Nepean—Carleton, which I have proudly represented since 2006, has been redistributed once. After my by-election in 2006, I changed boundaries slightly in 2007. However, nothing will be as drastic as what will happen in 2018 and what is happening right now federally, where my riding splits in two and becomes Nepean and Carleton. It's a very difficult decision for me that will be made in the next number of months and years as I decide which area to represent, and I'll do so with a heavy heart. It's like choosing between your two children. I love the people I represent, and I hope they know that I have that great affection for them. It will be a difficult decision.

That said, in the seconds I have left, I have three points that I want to talk to the government about and that maybe the member from the third party can also address. On October 19, my constituents will have two

federal members of Parliament, but they will only have one MPP, and I think this assembly needs to discuss that issue. We need to have full public hearings on this bill, because it does deal with the fabric of people's communities. And my colleague from Kitchener—Conestoga did mention the fact that we need advertising and outreach leading up to this, and I couldn't agree more.

Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Oshawa.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to be able to stand again and make comments on the enlightening speech given by my colleague from Timiskaming—Cochrane. I appreciate, as I always do, that in his remarks he really put this forward in the point of view of the voter.

We talk in this Legislature about the big picture, but really we need to look at it in terms of fine tuning and specifics, because as the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane pointed out, there are some adjustments or some fine tuning that should be made when we're talking about the boundaries—the northern boundaries, in particular, as he mentioned: the communities of Thorne, Eldee and the Wahnapiatae First Nation.

Really, if we're going to do this right, then we need to do this right, to look at those boundaries and make sure that the people who are being served are being served in the best way possible, taking into account transit, roads, geography, and communities and their interests. I hope that the government is taking that under advisement and is prepared to actually take action where that's concerned.

He mentioned that we need to do something about the voters list, that in this day and age, we should have a correct and current voters list; that shouldn't be a deterrent for people. Again, that's a conversation for another time, because that's not something we see in Bill 115.

1520

An interesting point, as we see things changing in terms of the demographics, is that we're going to see a perhaps more urbanized Legislature as time goes on. There's that fear that perhaps people in this Legislature, and future members, will listen when it comes to agricultural and rural issues and northern issues, but will they understand?

I think many of us went to the International Plowing Match. That's wonderful, but that can't be the only source of inspiration to become engaged in our agricultural communities and issues. As we have more people to speak for voters, hopefully those same members are going to be able to speak with the voters and bring their voices into the Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I listened very close to the remarks from the member for Timiskaming—Cochrane. He had some very good points to bring up.

I grew up in Toronto. A lot of members here, quite a few of them, did grow up here, but the majority of the

members in this Legislature did not grow up in a major city but in rural communities.

When I first came in here, it was much different than being on Toronto council, because it covers the whole province, and it varies from one area to another. The member mentioned that to drive from one end of his riding to the other took so many hours, and I learned something from that. There are other members who also have long distances to travel. For me, it's a short drive to get home. The members from outside of Toronto, like the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane—it takes you hours, probably, to get back to your riding every weekend. So it's very different.

I listened to your comments very carefully. I hope we get to hash this out in committee and have public hearings, of course, on this matter. There are a lot of issues to be brought up here.

The bill in front of us today is basically increasing the number of seats in this Legislature, which is important. Adding or keeping that one extra seat up north—instead of having 10, having 11—is important, because we need to hear from all of the province of Ontario.

I noticed that the members from outside Toronto articulate their constituents' views very well.

Once it gets to committee—and I hope that the member will be there—we can sit and discuss the changes and hear from the public as well. That's where most of the work gets done on these bills, to come up with something that is good for everybody and for the people of the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane for his response.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to thank the members from Ottawa-Orléans and Nepean-Carleton, my colleague from Oshawa and the member from Scarborough Southwest.

I'd like to use my remaining few minutes to talk once again about the urbanization of this Legislature. Again, that's a product of population. The majority of the population of Ontario is going to be in urban centres; we realize that.

What we have to decide as a Legislature and what I think we need to do a much better job on is—there are differences between rural and urban Ontario, and we have to make sure those differences actually strengthen our province instead of weaken it. I think that's something we have to come to grips with.

We are different, very different, and we see this with our cultures. Our different cultures make this province stronger. There definitely is a rural culture, and we have to make sure that that culture actually adds to this province.

Rural people, when we hear that, yes, we're the backbone of the province and agriculture is the biggest driver—it's a nice talking point, but when we see what's happening to our small towns and we see what's happening to our schools and we see what's happening to our roads, we need to get together and see what we can

do. Maybe the status quo isn't what we need. We need to really look at how to service the rural part of our province, because without a rural structure, your divide is going to make this province much weaker. We need to use it to make it stronger.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate? The government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much for recognizing me to speak on Bill 115, which is the Electoral Boundaries Act. I will be sharing my time with the member from Ottawa South, the member for Etobicoke Centre and the member from Scarborough-Rouge River.

This is a very important debate. I've been hearing some of the debate that's taking place, and I think it's heartening to have an opportunity to debate and talk about our democracy, which is such an incredible and important essence of who we are as a society.

A lot of us, at various stages in the history of our province, have come to this great province, have come to this great country, because of the freedoms that are associated with our culture and our society. The essence of those freedoms is of course our democracy, having the right to vote, having the right to elect representatives who will represent our communities, be it at the federal level, provincial level or municipal level. In that vein, I think this debate is very important, because what we are talking about in this particular bill is electoral boundaries, the size of our particular communities, and how those communities should look, what they feel like, what culture they have, what values they espouse and what kind of representatives those communities should have so that they are represented in an effective manner.

That's a key point. This province of ours is large. It's the largest province in the country. It continues to grow, which is a good thing. We are still the choice of immigrants coming from outside Canada or from within Canada to come and make Ontario their home. That is something to be proud of; that is something to cherish and celebrate. But the result of that is that our communities are growing, which means that elected representatives are increasingly, especially in urban and suburban parts of our communities, representing larger and larger groups of people.

In order to ensure that we have an effective democracy, in order to make sure that we have effective representation by representatives who are elected on behalf of their communities, we need to make sure that those communities are manageable so that we can do the work in a manner that ensures that our constituents are represented well. That is why this legislation adding 15 new seats to southern Ontario while also maintaining 11 seats, one more than what's permissible in the federal system, is a step in the right direction so that we have communities that are represented effectively and well in this chamber.

Speaker, you know that the province corresponds to or matches the ridings at the federal level. In the case of my riding of Ottawa Centre, which is a downtown commun-

ity, it is two thirds of the regional city of Ottawa before amalgamation. My community is quite densely populated. In fact, it's now growing vertically. With all the different condo towers that are starting to go up, those are vertical neighbourhoods.

I have about 123,000 people who live in my community that I have the pleasure of representing. It's more, I believe, than Prince Edward county, or Prince Edward Island; sorry—and the county as well. It's a pleasure to represent them.

Now, my riding does not get impacted that much through this legislation. There are only two boundaries that get changed, from representing both sides of the road to the middle of the road, so I probably lose, I think, about 30 homes, roughly speaking: one on Baseline Road, where the south side of Baseline will become part of Ottawa West–Nepean and I'll just maintain the north side, which is the experimental farm. It's the same thing with Fisher Avenue, where I had both sides of Fisher Avenue and now we will just have the east side of Fisher, and the west side will go as part of Ottawa West–Nepean.

I support those changes. In fact, when the boundary commission federally was doing their analysis, we presented at that process, asking for that clear delineation to erase some of the confusion that exists between those two ridings, because the boundaries used to get confusing and when you spoke to people, they weren't sure whether they were part of Ottawa Centre or Ottawa West–Nepean.

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But the way the riding is maintained keeps the nature and the character of the riding, the culture of the riding being the downtown community—as Ottawa Centre. I'm proud of that, that it stays the same way—and so is the name of the riding, which has been around for a long period of time.

I just wanted to say, in my limited time, that I support the changes. I think this will make our democracy that much more effective. It will allow for better voices and more diverse and representative voices being reflected in this House, when these changes come through and we have 15 more new members talking about the wishes, the desires and the aspirations of those communities, which will only mean that we have an even more inclusive and effective democracy, and a better society as a result, that we all aspire to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Continuing on, the member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: It's my pleasure to speak to Bill 115, the Electoral Boundaries Act. Of course, we're adding 15 new ridings, keeping 11 in the North. The boundaries were set by the electoral boundary commission, which I had the pleasure of presenting to a number of years ago. I made a deputation towards what is now my riding of Ottawa South—I wasn't the member then. I was pleased to make that deputation. In making that deputation, one of the arguments that I used was that it was a great riding to run an election in. The transportation routes were great, the polling stations were

great, the size was good—it's a little bit big, but you could effectively make sure you did your best to get the people out to vote and it wasn't difficult or a challenge. When we run in elections and as members, we have to be encouraging people to vote. So I felt very fortunate.

There's a very minor change. A number of houses in my riding are no longer there. But after listening to the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane this morning, I'm very fortunate to be in that kind of a riding. There are larger rural ridings that have challenges; he mentioned his two communities of Thorne and Eldee and a community that was just on the side of the lake. That's a barrier to people participating in democracy as well, because it's hard to—the larger the area is, the weaker the transportation networks. It's often harder to get people to participate in democracy, and to service them as well.

People don't make distinctions on those boundaries; we have to educate them. But it doesn't really matter to them whether they live just on the other side of Ottawa South and are in Ottawa Centre. From our office, whoever comes there, we serve. We'll connect them to another office.

I do want to make a couple of comments with regard to voter turnout—something that concerns me, and since we're having this opportunity to talk about democracy, because that's what these boundaries are all about: making sure people have a voice. I want to say a few things about voter suppression. We saw in the last election a voter suppression effort around robocalls. But that's not really what I want to talk about. Voter suppression is not something new. We've all been there and we know that it is a tactic that's employed by people to make sure people don't vote. It's not in this bill, but I want to mention that right now as it is something that I think we have to take more seriously. I think, no matter what side you're on, it's a fundamental interference with people's democratic right, and I think it should be taken very seriously.

I also wanted to make one more point with regard to some of the comments from the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane around scandal. There's an interesting thing. A Ford will never say GM's cars are going to kill you, because the next thing that you get from that is that cars are going to kill you. But as a group, we attack the category. We attack each other. We impugn motives on each other at times that we know aren't accurate, and we all do it to each other. I don't think that does the voter a service. I think we have to hold each other to account on the basis of the things that we've done, but not impugn motives on people and become personal. I think the personal part of politics, when we call each other names, that's the thing that really turns people off.

We're here to work together. That's what people expect from us. They know we're not always going to agree, but when it becomes personal, that's what turns them off.

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's an honour to join the debate on this important topic.

As I have been hearing the debate, I have been thinking a little bit about some of the constituents in my community in Etobicoke Centre. Etobicoke Centre has one of the highest percentages of seniors of any riding in the province and in the country. Some of the seniors who live in my community reflect sometimes about the value of their vote, the value of their franchise, about the right to vote. Once in a while, I hear from seniors, particularly people who have come to Canada from other countries where that right is not enshrined in the way it is here in Canada, about how fortunate we are that we live in this great country and that we have the opportunity to shape the future of our community and of our country.

Something that has stuck with me in hearing from them is how important it is that we do our best to make sure that everyone has an equal right to vote and as equal an influence as possible over the decisions that are made here and that shape our future.

With that in mind, I think this bill helps to do that. The first thing it does is, of course, amend the boundaries, and it has been mentioned on a number of occasions here during this debate that the amending of those boundaries will help ensure that the riding boundaries are set in such a way that they are more representative of the population that they encompass, which ensures that the vote and voting influence within each riding is more equitably distributed. I think that's important.

The other thing that it does is requires that youth—16- to 17-year-olds—be registered in collaboration with the Chief Electoral Officer. I think that's a positive thing. Let me talk a little bit about as to why I think that is, the first reason being—and I've mentioned this a little bit—this principle of equal representation. Redistributing the boundaries will help ensure that every person's vote has more equal weight. We heard the story about one of the members on this side who has a riding with about 250,000 people in it. My community has about 115,000. That's a vast difference. Redistributing the ridings will allow that to be a little bit more equal.

The second thing I think it does is it allows for better coordination between provincial and federal members. I work closely with my counterpart. He happens to be of a different political persuasion, but we nevertheless work together on a range of issues that touch our community. I think that's an important aspect of what my role is and what our roles are as representatives. Having multiple boundaries cut across a single riding, or multiple federal ridings that cross a provincial one or vice versa, makes it really challenging to collaborate effectively, especially for those folks who end up in those areas where there are multiple ridings within your riding. This helps to coordinate and collaborate in the interests of constituents much more effectively.

To the extent that there are ridings that become quite large, like the one that was mentioned earlier with 250,000 or so people, this bill will allow those constituents to get better service from their elected official because that elected official will have a more manageable number of constituents who they serve, allow them to

respond and advocate on their behalf effectively, and invest the time with each of them as is required.

The other piece that I think is really positive about the bill is this idea of engaging young people at an earlier age. One of the favourite parts of this job for me is visiting civics classes in my community of Etobicoke Centre and talking to young people about what we do as politicians, the importance of the vote, the decisions that we make, and why it's important that they get engaged and stay engaged. My big takeaway from each of the classes that I speak to is whatever you do, when you get to 18 years old, please make sure you vote. I think this is something that will help facilitate that process, that engagement as well.

When you think about the decisions that we make here, most of the decisions take time to implement and most of the decisions are long-range in their nature. They are going to impact our young people more than anyone else, arguably, in many cases—not in all cases, but in many. Having our young people engaged is critical.

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I think this is a bill that helps strengthen our democracy. It helps strengthen our franchise. It helps ensure that we better coordinate with our federal counterparts. It engages the next generation of voters more effectively. I think that's all positive. Hopefully, we can get this bill passed and move on to the other matters that are important to the constituents in Ontario and my constituents of Etobicoke Centre.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Next we have the member for Scarborough—Rouge River.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: It is my pleasure to join in this debate and make a few comments on Bill 115, An Act to enact the Representation Act, 2015.

I listened carefully, on all sides, to what was being said all along. To be honest with you, Mr. Speaker, it's a very short bill. The lengthy part of the bill is to draw the boundaries in the north, where we have the 11 ridings that are different from the federal boundaries that are established under the federal election boundaries commission.

I think what we're doing here is exactly what we did in the middle 1990s. I remember it was done, if I remember correctly, in 2005. I ran in a by-election in 2005, and I had to run within the old boundaries. Two years later, I was running within different boundaries, which caused a lot of grief, if I could put it that way.

Again, here we are in 2015, and we're discussing it before the next election, hopefully, in 2018. But it's a necessary thing to do, because the voting public should know that their vote has an equal and, if I could say, fair representation here in the Legislature, that certain members are not disenfranchised.

As you heard, my colleague from Oak Ridges—Markham has a population of well over 200,000; she has 177,000 voters. Myself, I have only about 88,000 voters, and I've got about 132,000 residents in my area. The reason for doing this boundary change before the next election, and mirroring the image of the boundaries of the

federal government, is really to provide the public with fair representation.

I heard a couple of people across the way speak about certain things, and I want to comment on them. I heard, I believe, two or three members supportive of a permanent electors list. I have to tell you, it may work well in the north, and maybe in southern Ontario, where you don't have a lot of movement of individuals. I know my colleague from Leeds–Grenville complained that in his area, people who have never moved for 35 years, their name disappeared on the list. We've had a permanent list for quite a while, so the list is not the issue. The issue is the administration by Elections Ontario and their team in doing the proper job.

On the opposite side, in the urban centres, like my own riding, I find that the list is changing so rapidly that they can't keep up with it because of the movement of people, because we have, if I could say, compact densities, that people have to move. We have a lot of people that live in rental property, and they have to move for whatever reason. Then we have a lot of movement because of the seniors moving from their home that they have lived in for 30, 40 years into something smaller to accommodate them.

For some reason, Elections Ontario cannot keep up with these list changes. I think that's what we should focus on: why it is they can't keep up, and why it is that the list cannot be accurate. I can tell you that in my own list, I know it's well over 10% inaccurate. I've had thousands of voters on my list who have left. I've had people vote but I can't find them. This is not right.

I think one of the failures we have in the list also is, if your name is not on the list, they'll allow you to put it on on election day. If you look at the foundation of a democracy, it is set that you have to be a citizen to vote. If you look at the IDs that Elections Ontario accept, very few of them actually prove you're a citizen. To me, that's the biggest failure in the system. How can you protect the democratic institution when the one important document, which is to identify that I'm a citizen of Canada, is not there in the act?

That's a discussion of another day. Today it's the boundaries—that we should copy the federal government. I totally agree with it, and I'll be supporting this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Hearing from a number of government members speak to the bill, it's interesting how—to me it came across that they were delivering democracy to Ontario. I found it quite interesting that this is something new that they're bringing to Ontario whereas, over the past two and a half years, the federal government has worked hard to ensure that the riding distribution has been taken care of. They're basically just copying and pasting the federal legislation into a bill, with a few minor variations in northern Ontario.

It was really interesting that the member from Ottawa South brought up—and I do agree with his point about

being personal and attacks one way or another turning off people in politics. I would like to make mention again that this was the opportunity for the government—since they didn't have to do much work with this bill, just put it together—to tackle third-party advertising, which is nothing but personal, which does nothing but turn people off at the voting poll, which is nothing more than \$10 million spent to keep you guys in power. You had the opportunity. You talk a lot about third-party advertising reform, but you do nothing about it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the member to make his comments directly through the Chair. Speak about the government in the third person, if you will.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Sorry, Speaker. I was so excited that I had a great point of contention with this government as they continue to bloviate—I'll use that word again—continually, and produce nothing at the end of the day. It's unfortunate that—they talk a good talk; they had the opportunity to do something to benefit Ontarians on top of redistributing. We can't argue with that. The feds have done it. We should copy what the feds have done, and maintain our presence in northern Ontario. However, they dropped the ball on this one, and it is unfortunate that Ontario is going to have to wait for another government bill to make a fix.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's a pleasure to stand in my chair today and talk about the electoral boundary reform on behalf of the citizens in Windsor–Tecumseh.

I heard the member from Ottawa South earlier. I think he made a mistake when he said that his riding of 123,000, I think he said, was larger than the population of Prince Edward Island. I think PEI's population is—not Ottawa South; Ottawa Centre—146,000. I'd love to be in PEI. I love the people from Prince Edward Island. They elect 27 members of the Legislature; 10 of them get in cabinet. They have four senators and four members of Parliament—MPs—to represent 146,000 people. As you know, it's a small island, but we have ridings—I think of Kenora–Rainy River—that are bigger than the country of France. You have to have three or four offices to keep up with all of that.

In my case, in Windsor–Tecumseh, our boundary isn't changing. I will miss my federal member of Parliament, Joe Comartin, a New Democrat—voted not once, not twice, but three times as the most knowledgeable member of Parliament; voted by his peers. We're really going to miss that. I have high hopes that our candidate, Cheryl Hardcastle, the former deputy mayor of Tecumseh, will replace him, even though those boundaries won't be changing.

To the point; From Timiskaming–Cochrane, my friend Mr. Vanthof noted that we're not a cookie cutter. We need things different in the north and in rural Ontario. We need different regulations for our schools, for our hospitals. No matter the population base, there should be other considerations taken to keep some of

those schools and hospitals open. Thank you for your time this afternoon.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments?

Hon. David Zimmer: I'm pleased to add my comments on this debate on electoral boundaries reform. I would just want to make three points.

First, I do want to thank the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London, the PC member opposite, for his support of this party's maintaining the 11 northern ridings. The federal government of course will only have 10 ridings in the north but we on this side of the House—and I'm glad that the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London agrees with that, that we maintain those ridings, because the situation in the north is special, as some of the speakers have referenced. Just the sheer size, the physical size of the geographical area and the way the population is spread around—it is very, very difficult and challenging to maintain contact with a population spread around such a huge area. So thank you for that support, to the official opposition, on this. I do note that you somewhat apologized for your federal cousins by saying, "I guess my party missed this one," referencing the federal Progressive Conservatives.

With respect to Willowdale, Willowdale is being carved up a little bit. Right now there are 140,000 constituents in Willowdale. It's very dense and although it is relatively easy, in terms of dealing with the geography of Willowdale, it's a challenge dealing with 140,000 people. I am losing a corner of my riding on the southeast corner of the riding, but I'm gaining another piece on the northwest corner of the riding. The net result of that is that there will be a couple of new ridings up there. One is Don Valley North. This is going to make it easier for the MPP to represent that area.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased again to have an opportunity to respond to the speech from the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, the member for Ottawa South and the member from Scarborough–Rouge River.

I guess point number one that I'll talk about is the voters list. I think there was some mention about how frustrating it is that they always seem to be so inaccurate—that's the best way I can describe it. We've probably all experienced and we've all had people contacting us after elections to tell us how frustrated they are with the state of the voters list. That's why—I think it came up earlier in debate—the idea of some sort of permanent voter's card makes sense, whether it be your health card that doubles as a voter's card, perhaps, and it's the individual's responsibility—if you change your address, you have to change your driver's licence and you have your voter's card up to date. Perhaps that would be a way of actually having accurate lists. But we can certainly do a better job than we have historically. I think that's an area that needs improvement.

In terms of Ontario maintaining 11 northern ridings, as this bill does do, as one of those 11 northern ridings, I completely support that. The fact of the matter is that the geography of northern Ontario is huge. My riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka is one of the smaller ones, and I believe it stays more or less the same with these proposed changes. But for me to go from my home to Dokis First Nation, it's a three-and-a-half-hour drive one way to get there, so obviously that makes it challenging. It's just big. I have 26 municipalities, seven First Nations that have unorganized territories, and there's only so much you can do to try to get around to provide proper representation.

As was pointed out, when you compare it to Prince Edward Island in particular, that would be one riding and one MPP in Ontario at the current state. So I do support maintaining 11 northern ridings.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): One of the members who spoke can respond. The member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to respond to the members from Elgin–Middlesex–London, Windsor–Tecumseh, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, and thank them for their comments.

I'm glad that the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London agrees that we do spend far too much time attacking each other. I don't agree with everything that he says, but I do want to thank him for giving us all a new word today: "bloviate." I'm glad that he enunciated it fairly clearly the second time around because the first time he said it I thought he said "boviate," and I thought it had something to do with cows. But now I'm sure that the word "bloviate" is going to appear in Hansard far more often now that you've introduced it into the Legislature, and I genuinely thank you for that.

To the member for Windsor–Tecumseh, I think I made similar comments. I do understand the challenges. I'm very fortunate to be in a riding that it's easy to work in. In the north, it's more difficult. As the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane described, there's a real challenge representing people in the north. If you think there is a road on the map and there isn't one, it provides a real challenge, a real barrier to people.

To the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, I don't know what the answer is on the voters list, because the reality is that it's got to be a list. It's the list that we keep. Even if you had a card, you'd have to check that card off against the list so people wouldn't have voted a couple of times. It's a challenge for all of us. We've all been there, where Mrs. Smith has been on the list for 45 years at the same address, and the next time she's not there in that election.

Mr. Speaker, I would like, on a point of order, to correct my record. Earlier, I referred to Lake—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Sorry. First, you have to request an opportunity to present your point of order, which you've done. I recognize you on a point of order.

Mr. John Fraser: Sorry, I'll get it right. I'd just like to correct my record.

Lake Wanapitei is the name of the lake, and it's the Wahnapiet First Nation that the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane raised in his remarks. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Every member can correct their record on a point of order.

Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to address Bill 115, the Electoral—

Hon. David Zimmer: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs on a point of order.

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you, Speaker. Just so I can follow this debate, because it's a very serious one, I'm wondering if the member from Elgin—Middlesex—London could tell me what the word "bloviate" means. I've checked the Oxford Dictionary, and there's no word there. I just want to make sure I don't miss anything in the debate—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That is not a point of order. The member for Haldimand—Norfolk has the floor.

Interjections.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to continue this debate on Bill 115, concerning electoral boundaries in the province of Ontario. I look at the bill itself, "to enact the Representation Act, 2015, repeal the Representation Act, 2005 and amend the Election Act, the Election Finances Act and the Legislative Assembly Act," and as we know, much of this legislation is certainly the southern riding boundaries as derived from federal legislation, the Canada Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act.

A lot of it is about redistribution for the purpose of representation. Ontario—bear with me—is divided into the following electoral districts: the 11 northern electoral districts whose names and boundaries are set out in this legislation itself; and, almost by default, the remaining 111 southern electoral districts, whose names and boundaries are set out in the federal legislation. So this legislation really doesn't have to go into detail about rivers and roads, and changes and subtractions and additions with respect to much of the new system.

The federal electoral districts come into effect on the first dissolution of Parliament after May 1, 2014—as we know, that has already happened—and the present redistribution provincially takes effect immediately after dissolution after November 30, 2016. So we have a deadline of November 2016, and until that happens, we remain with 107 seats, or electoral districts.

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The system remains—and I am personally thankful for this—one member for each district. I find that's fairly simple for the people that I represent, in contrast to an idea that was floated several elections ago, the proportional representation system. In fact, after that election—and many of us spent a fair number of all-candidates'

nights discussing proportional representation. I know down my way all the parties supported that except mine, and I really was in the minority. I think we did something like 10 all-candidates' nights, 10 evenings of debating proportional representation. I was obviously in the minority and got beat up a bit on my position of first-past-the-post, one member, one vote, and one representative for each riding.

As it turns out, election day came and left and the decision was made to have the referendum, and the people rejected proportional representation. I consider that a dead issue; some may not. I see in the media talk again of bringing back that debate.

The legislation before us comes from recommendations from the Chief Electoral Officer, and this government has indicated that they are committed to addressing these recommendations and a few other things: "Moving the fixed election date from fall to spring," as described, "to help avoid overlap with federal and municipal elections"; "Engaging more young people with the voting process"—not giving them the vote, but engaging them with the process—"through provisional registration" for those who are 16 or 17, but the voting age still remains 18; "Strengthening rules on ... third-party advertising."

Just going back to having the spring election and some of the reasons given—and this is a news release from the Ontario government, I notice—to "make it easier for people to vote because the weather is usually better." I don't know about that, how we can predict the weather, spring and fall. So far we've had a pretty nice fall. Albeit much of it is in the summertime, there are great days in September, October—not November. We get a lot of rain in April, May.

Ideally, and I say this as a farmer, you get those hot, dry winds, certainly in southern Ontario—I can't speak to the north—that dry up our land so we can get corn and beans in at that time of year.

They talk about how the days are longer and, again, reducing the overlap with other elections at the provincial and at the federal level.

I will mention that I represent presently a riding that is named Haldimand—Norfolk. I was first elected in 1995, and at that time the riding was just called Norfolk, as it had been called for many, many years. I notice the photographs in the halls of this precinct of some of my predecessors who represented the riding of Norfolk, gosh, going back to the 1850s. Looking at those photographs, by and large, in many of the ridings, if you will, in many cases you did ride the riding by horseback or horse and carriage, perhaps horse and sleigh. Many of the ridings seemed to mimic or follow the county boundaries, and that really would have been a boon for people to figure out—there wasn't the access to communication we have now as far as where they live and who they vote for, municipally, provincially and federally.

My grandfather was a federal MP and he represented the riding of Norfolk back in the day, just after the Second World War. The riding that I first ran in was called Norfolk, but it encompassed Norfolk county and

the town of Tillsonburg, which is in Oxford county. I'm sure that some people, if they were serious, maybe felt it was a bit of a challenge because nobody knew me in Tillsonburg. I had worked in the Norfolk, Haldimand and Brant area for many, many years. Part of my job—I actually did more speaking engagements in the community than I seem to do now, in a sense, as a consultant. Because of the jurisdiction and the industries that I was consulting with, Tillsonburg wasn't in my area. I think I maybe knew a few people in Tillsonburg. By the same token, they would not have known who I was. That was a challenge.

Many of us like a challenge; we seek a challenge. Most of my focus was on the town of Tillsonburg at the time. The Norfolk-Tillsonburg riding boundaries had been that way for many, many years. I know that my predecessor, NDP Norm Jamison, represented that area, and the chap before him, MPP Gord Miller, a Liberal, represented Norfolk-Tillsonburg. It made sense because Tillsonburg is a unique town. It sits right on the intersection of three different counties. So, again, following county lines didn't necessarily make that much sense. How do you decide in which county Tillsonburg would land? Much of the riding distribution does seem to be out of the hands of our area. The massive ebb and flow of population across the province of Ontario over the last 200 years has had an effect on the boundaries down my way.

A number of years later, as with many MPPs, the boundaries changed again, and I ran in a riding that represented all of Norfolk county but subtracted Tillsonburg. I was able to win in a riding that encompassed a major part of Haldimand county but not Dunnville; Tim Hudak remained in the Dunnville riding even though it was part of Haldimand county. I had the good fortune to represent, as I recall, three townships in Brant county. Burford township, the town of Burford, like Tillsonburg, always seemed to be bounced from pillar to post, depending on these decisions made by the commission as far as population movements. I represented Burford township, Oakland township and Onondaga township, and many of these areas were far to the north of where I lived. Interestingly enough, the further north I went and the farther away I got from home, the more votes I got. I kind of asked myself: "What does that mean?"

The boundaries changed again in my particular area. I lost Brant county—a bit of a blessing personally because I was trying to cover three different agricultural counties. It was an awful lot of travel. You attend three different counties in one day. Much of my focus is on farm organizations. So rather than, for example, attending one meeting of, say, the Norfolk Federation of Agriculture, I would also have to attend the Haldimand Federation of Agriculture and the Brant federation, or the cattlemen's association or the dairy organizations. Rather than attending one county meeting or one annual meeting, you attend three annual meetings.

Brant county was lost, as far as the area I represented, and I gained, to my good fortune, the town of Dunnville,

which seemed to be, fortunately for me, about as Conservative as the town of Tillsonburg, which I'd lost a few years earlier.

I think my point is that changes in boundaries do have an influence, obviously, on representation, on the kind of elected representative you end up with. I suppose, looking through the lens, of those of us elected here, it has a big influence on the work we do, depending on the mix of the people who have found themselves in your particular riding.

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Presently, there are no changes, certainly during this round, in Haldimand-Norfolk. Neighbouring areas have seen some change.

The riding redistribution review in Ontario, conducted by the electoral boundaries commission for Ontario, took a look at Niagara region—there are almost half a million people there; it's short of half a million—and made a decision that it would warrant four ridings. If you look at Niagara-Hamilton, the area I represent, and Brant-Brantford, there are about a million, all told. They created a new riding, known as Hamilton West-Ancaster-Dundas. People are fighting that one out, as we speak, at the federal level. It essentially encompasses north and south and the west side of Hamilton region.

In Niagara, the commission has decided that Niagara West-Glanbrook was due for a change, so during this federal election, it's now known as Niagara West. If you'll bear with me—these are the kinds of things that we read in these documents—there was an addition to this new riding of Niagara West, something we will see at the provincial level, of part of the city of St. Catharines—lying west of Louth Street, Highway 406, Third Street and Courtleigh Road—and the township of Wainfleet. That makes an awful lot of sense to me; I border Wainfleet on the east side of my riding.

There was the subtraction of Binbrook, Glanbrook, Hannon—quite honestly, this is up near my riding, but I have to admit I don't know where Hannon is, unless there's a spelling mistake here—and Mount Hope; they were all lost. This is the Tim Hudak riding. They join the new riding of Flamborough-Glanbrook.

Just to clarify that part of it—and I use this just to indicate the machinations that go on in a process like this, with well over 100 ridings in the province of Ontario—Niagara West now is still Grimsby, Lincoln, Pelham, West Lincoln and Wainfleet, as I mentioned, and part of the city of St. Catharines. We read a very detailed description of where the roads are and how that follows. It makes it very clear to me why, many years ago, we developed the concept of a map. A map describes it much better. I'm sure I would not be allowed to hold up a map; it might be considered a prop.

It's interesting: The redistribution leaves this new riding of Niagara West as smaller than the average—the population is 86,533—as part of the four ridings in Niagara, deleting, essentially, that Hamilton side of the riding. Much of this, I feel, makes sense.

Kitchener South-Hespeler: That's a new riding that has been created to form parts of the former Kitchener—

Conestoga—the member for Kitchener—Conestoga had a few things to say about that this afternoon—and the Cambridge ridings. He made mention of those old historical towns that many of us in the area are so familiar with—Galt, Preston and Hespeler—that, with the advent of regional government and regionalization, are now known as Cambridge.

It's clearly necessary every 10 years or so to revisit and revise riding boundaries. It can be confusing for the people who do the voting, those of us who have been involved for many, many years, and we can find it confusing.

In this sense, it's perhaps a good thing that we have a longer period for the federal election. A lot of people wouldn't agree with that; people are finding that annoying. But if it does one thing, it gives people more time to sort out which riding they live in and who they vote for. There are an awful lot of changes right across Canada.

They've got a bit more time, obviously, to get to know a bit about the issues but also to find out who their candidates are. A lot of those candidates are brand new, and a lot of the seasoned politicians have retired, certainly in Ontario. So you have voters who are finding themselves in a different riding altogether, or they're in the same old riding but it has a new name. These folks are going to show up at the polls—hopefully only once—to vote once on election day, on the 19th. Some people may be a little baffled that the guy or the gal that they normally vote for isn't on the ballot this time—this person might be running somewhere else, or maybe they have retired.

Very simply—and it seems simple—we mirror the federal electoral boundaries, and we add 15 new ridings to increase the size of the Legislature to 122, with that one difference. Northern Ontario will continue to follow the boundaries set out in 2004, and I think we all agree to that. At some point, there may be a case where part of rural Ontario may need some similar consideration.

Mirroring the federal boundaries: Certainly, with my history in this place, that was the idea put forward and accomplished by a former Premier, Mike Harris. Part of his goal—and that's the reason I got involved in this business back in 1994. He made a commitment to reduce the number of MPPs to 103 from 130. He did that in 1999, and he did that by electoral redistribution, a promise that was made. I remember that day very well. I know that people down in my neck of the woods—we literally cheered that night, that he was going to cut the number of politicians by 20%.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Chatham—Kent—Essex.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'd just like to take a quick moment here to extend a warm welcome to today's page captain, Siena Pacheco, from the great riding of Chatham—Kent.

To her parents and family members, first of all, I would like to say, “Bom dia,” and of course, to her mother, Rosmarie Pacheco; her father, Luis Pacheco; her

sister Alexia Pacheco and her grandmother, Anna Belli: Obrigado.

Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We welcome you to the Ontario Legislature. But we're now doing questions and comments.

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, electoral reform usually comes around every five to 10 years. We're adding 15 ridings to the provincial seats. But the problem with some of these changes is the fact that traditional areas in certain municipalities get split up. In other words, if you had, let's say, Winona-Stoney Creek, and they have always voted together and they have similar issues and similar wishes—these sometimes get broken up, and they have to end up voting with another group that may have a different interest and a different agenda, and they don't really feel part of the process. That's one of the disadvantages of redistribution.

When they do these realignments, a lot of the time, it's politically motivated. Whoever is doing it and decides to bring this forward—whether it be the ruling government, or whoever decides to bring the bill forward—has obviously gone over the maps and had, obviously, an advantage of where they would like to see things go, so they can win the next election and win more seats. Trust me: Those things happen, and it's unfortunate that people don't admit that that's the reason they do the boundary changes.

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Certainly population distribution is important too. Some people have more people to represent than others. In the North they have a lot less to represent. In the south it varies, because with all the building going on in southern Ontario, different populations change and vary. That could have a different negative or positive impact on the boundary change. I have concerns when they change the boundaries, because when I look at the maps, I see that it might favour the blue guys or it might favour the red guys, but very seldom does it favour the orange guys.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Granville Anderson: It gives me great pleasure to speak to this bill. I would like to acknowledge the member from Haldimand—Norfolk and my friend from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

The changes to the boundaries are never more pronounced than how it affects my riding of Durham. My riding is one of the larger ridings. It's not as large as those up north, but it takes me an hour and a half from one end to the other. I have lost portions in the west and in the east. Such a little town that I have developed a great relationship with is Uxbridge, which is to the west; to the east, I've lost Newcastle and Orono. These are areas that I've come to know very well, having grown up in that neighbourhood.

Again, I do see the need for changes. For example, 10 years ago, Bowmanville's population was roughly 45,000; now it's 95,000. Uxbridge has around 30,000.

Scugog, on the other hand, has around 25,000. So you're looking at representing 150,000 people in this area, which is manageable, but it's a bit much.

Also, another fact that I take into consideration: After this federal election, I would have had the MPs, which would be rather difficult to work with. It would make life a lot more difficult.

So although I do have apprehensions about the changes because of my relationships that I've developed within the various communities, I can see the rationale for it. It's just something that will provide better representation, I believe, for the people I do represent.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to address this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Three weeks from today, the residents of Nepean–Carleton will have two members of Parliament and one provincial MPP. In fact, my constituency has grown by 85% since the time I took office, just nine and a half years ago. That gives you a sense of why we need to address redistribution and boundary changes.

In fact, I think members would be interested to know that I will represent—according to the 2011 census, and by no means is this exhaustive, because I think the number is higher now—159,000 constituents. That was the 2011 number, and of course we've seen, as I've mentioned, the growth. To put that into context, there are four federal members of Parliament for the province of Prince Edward Island, and there are only 140,000 constituents there.

When we look at the numbers that we have here in the province of Ontario, it is important—and I know that I'm not alone in worrying about the impact that this will have on our provincial constituents, particularly after October 19, when, as my colleague from Durham noted, we will have far more MPs than MPPs. I know my colleague from Kitchener–Conestoga mentioned the Minister of Community—

Hon. Helena Jaczek: —and Social Services.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —yes, Community and Social Services, who has the largest riding in Canada at this point in time.

What I would urge is that the Board of Internal Economy, over the next two and a half or three years, look at these special circumstances and the workload on our MPPs in order to ensure that we are representing our constituents to the best of our ability and to the best of the resources here at the provincial Legislature.

With that—I know I have seconds left—I cannot underscore enough in this assembly that we need to do more in order to bridge that rural-urban divide that is being exacerbated as we see high growth and development. I presently represent a high-growth community, an urban centre, as well as a rural centre. I cannot stress enough that all of us in this assembly must do better in order to bridge that gap.

Thank you so much for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to comment on some of the points that the member from Haldimand–Norfolk made during his 20-minute lead on this piece of legislation.

Listen, electoral reform is incredibly important. It's one of those institutions we need to ensure that we protect going forward. When we don't, you see our democratic rights slowly being eroded away. Electoral reform is part of that discussion, that conversation and that debate.

What is missing in this piece of legislation, though, is current relevant issues that we are facing even in the Legislature this morning—an updated piece of legislation as it relates to the bribery sections of the Election Act, for instance. If you're going to review a piece of legislation around electoral reform, why not capture the places that are being missed right now, like the bribery sections of the Election Act or the advertising component that happened in Simcoe North most recently, where an ad was placed in contravention of the Election Act. It doesn't instill confidence in voters, going forward.

I thought that the member from Haldimand–Norfolk made a really interesting point because he gave us that context of when Mike Harris promised to reduce the politicians in this place, to go from 130 to 103. There was no public consultation on that. There has not been a lot of public consultation on this expansion.

That said, though, in the riding of Kitchener–Waterloo, the riding will be distributed so that I run solely in Waterloo. I'm going to miss my Kitchener component, but as many members have commented, I'm looking forward to not being so lonely in this regard, after this next election. It is lonely being the only New Democrat in Waterloo region.

There's hope for the future when these riding boundaries are redistributed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Haldimand–Norfolk for his reply.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I find interesting the responses from members in talking about their own areas and their new areas. For a piece of legislation that seemed rather mundane, just drawing lines on a map, so many of the dynamics are drawn out.

I was really intrigued by the comment about the manipulation of the boundaries, something we really don't know about down in Haldimand–Norfolk; in fact, they're not being moved at all. That is the case. It's illegal in Canada and Ontario, and it's illegal in the UK and Australia, as I recall. But it does go on—and south of the border.

One of my favourite words is “gerrymandering.” A number of years ago I googled that, and there was a fellow named Gerry Mandering who owns a bar-restaurant in the Philippines. I don't know if he's still running that bar and restaurant. Again, to gerrymander: to manipulate the boundaries. It works well in a first-

past-the-post system; not so much in a proportional representation system. It always seems to work well for the incumbent, the party in power, the people who do draw the maps, the state or political groups who have the opportunity to draw the maps. It is really quite interesting. Sometimes it is done for good reasons, to avoid any kind of racial discrimination, for example, by drawing a boundary map to encompass a certain racial group within one boundary so they have a much higher chance of winning the election. This is done in many of the states in the United States.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's a pleasure to rise and speak about Bill 115. Certainly, listening to the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek and then this opposite opinion from the member from Haldimand-Norfolk about the lack of manipulation here in the province of Ontario and across Canada—I actually am going to speak a little bit to that, based on the federal boundary changes that happened, or were proposed to happen, in my own riding.

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We know the federal boundaries for the federal election have changed, and so we have a bill before us that, really, just wants to deal with the federal boundary changes, when we really should be talking not just about the numbers of voters, we should be talking about access, being able to vote. We should be talking about democracy and increasing voter turnout. When we discuss electoral boundaries, it's important to ensure that not only the electorate is onside, but that local city councils and regional councils and county councils, and community groups as well, are involved and have the opportunity to actually speak to those changes.

During the federal boundary changes back in 2012, the federal boundary commission had hearings in Niagara because it was proposing changes in Niagara, as well as changes in the Hamilton area. The federal Conservatives at the time were proposing to actually change my riding by taking out the city of Thorold and adding the city of Fort Erie, without any regard to anything else other than that they wanted Thorold, because Thorold, of course, is a stronghold for the NDP. Even when we had a Liberal government federally for 33 years, we won every poll in the town of Thorold. They proposed to take this community of about 18,000 people, a small manufacturing town—paper mills, factories—and attach this town in the east to the big rural riding of Niagara West—Glanbrook, with a little wee strip of the bottom of the minister without portfolio's riding, St. Catharines; to cut Thorold right out of our riding and then to give us Fort Erie down the road, which we'd be happy to have.

However, we didn't have similarities with the town of Fort Erie. We have many similarities with the town of Thorold. They didn't look at the fact that Fort Erie, Niagara Falls and Niagara-on-the-Lake are all border communities. They all border the United States. They all have very similar issues. But the Conservatives federally

just wanted to knock Thorold out because they thought that they might have a chance to take over the riding of Welland, which has been held by the New Democrats for 40 years this year.

There was no thought even given to the fact that we are a two-tiered government, that we have north-south or east-west bus routes. They didn't look at our regional bus system. They didn't look at any of the planning processes or reports at the Niagara region to see what kinds of plans there were for economic growth and between which municipalities in the Niagara region. None of that was taken into account. It was just clearly, "Well, we're going to try and level these numbers out and we're going to do this by attaching this little strip of a town to a completely rural riding."

It made no sense whatsoever, and so of course I went out and made presentations, as did our federal member, as did probably every mayor across the Niagara region—and some of the city councillors—to the federal boundary commission. They bought our arguments, at the end of the day. We even went into as much detail as what is long distance—because, across Niagara, the whole Niagara region cannot call each other without incurring long-distance charges. So to actually make that move and add Fort Erie to Welland would have been long distance for the constituents, where Thorold to Welland is actually not long distance. I can tell you, we've been after Bell Canada for a hundred years to actually make the whole Niagara region with no long-distance charges and they've refused to do it to date. They didn't look at the transportation corridors. They didn't do any of those things.

It was interesting, because after the boundaries commission actually made their recommendation, then the member from St. Catharines, Rick Dykstra, the MP, came back to committee and tried to get it changed again even though he had not shown up or made any presentation. So when we talk about gerrymandering or manipulating, clearly it happens. It happened in my riding.

But there's other stuff that Elections Ontario needs to look at as well. I know I've met with the elections commissioner after both of the last two elections. We talked about some of the things that certainly happened during the provincial elections in my riding—I'm sure that they happened in some of yours as well—where full streets or areas in a community didn't get voter registration cards. You know how ticked off people get when they don't get a voter registration card? They don't want to go out to vote, because that registration card tells them where they're voting, what time they're voting, when the polls are open and where the returning offices are. You know, we have a low enough voter turnout that, in fact, those small things need to be fixed.

We also need to make sure of, and this legislation could address that, the locations of where the returning offices are. I can tell you, in 2011 and in 2014 in my riding, the returning office was on the site of an old, closed factory, not on a bus route, kind of at the edge of the city, with no access for anybody to get there without a vehicle. You probably have to walk three quarters of a

kilometre from the bus stop to actually get there to vote if you don't have a car. So I talked to the elections commissioner about that issue as well. I would think that the Liberal government would be interested in getting as many voters to the polls as possible. But, in fact, we're not addressing any of that language in this particular bill.

This is the kind of work that can be done by Elections Ontario, but we need to ensure, as MPPs, that in fact we're sharing that information with the commissioner. Each and every one of us should be meeting with him after each election.

The issue of not having access to go into apartment buildings and senior centres—you don't know how many times in the last two provincial elections that I was denied access; even in the Sudbury by-election, we were denied access into an apartment building. Elections Ontario doesn't have any staff around to actually deal with those issues. When you call in to complain, they say, "Sorry, put it in your report. We don't have anybody to deal with it," so we can't get our information and you can't get your information to the voters. Then, you can't encourage people to actually go out and vote.

Then there is the issue of the photo ID piece that I think a few people actually talked about today. Certainly I come from a riding where there are many, many seniors—one of the highest senior populations, actually, in the province. Many seniors don't have any photo ID. If they don't have a driver's licence and they don't have a new health card—there are still millions of people without the new health card—then when they actually get to a voting station, they have problems actually trying to get to vote, particularly if they were one of those people who didn't get a voter registration card. Then they're being harassed by poll clerks and by DROs, these 80- and 90-year-old people who are trying to go out and actually be democratic and exercise their vote. These are the kinds of things that this bill should actually be dealing with.

Now, the federal government also ended the door-to-door census. I can tell you that I did those door-to-door censuses a few times in my lifetime when I was actually working in another career. We had to go back four and five times to make sure that we got each and every person that we thought lived in those houses and get correct information. Now, today, we get these short forms; some people fill them out and some people don't. I heard somebody say today, I think it was the member from Scarborough-Rouge River, his lists were 10% incorrect. I can tell you that in the elections I've been involved in, there have been probably 40% to 50% of the voters on the lists whose information is incorrect. They either don't live there anymore—especially if you have a lot of apartment buildings in your particular riding, because the turnover in apartment buildings is so high.

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I think those are some of the things that we should actually be dealing with in this bill, and I would think that the Liberals would actually want to do that. I would hope that Elections Canada and Elections Ontario would

want to be promoting and encouraging voting, especially for young people.

I live in a riding where we have a very high volume of students, as well. Niagara College is in my riding, in Welland; we have a campus in Welland. Brock University also borders on my riding. Between those two institutions, there are probably 30,000 students. But I can tell you that when we actually go out and canvass—I've experienced this in my own elections, and I've certainly experienced it in federal elections as well—these students don't get any information. They're living in student housing. They're living in rental units. They're not told that they can, in fact, vote where they're going to school or they can vote at home.

It's very difficult for them, because they need to have something, some piece of ID that actually says, "I'm residing at 40 Smith Street in Thorold." Many of them don't, because their parents signed a lease for them on their rental unit, so then when it comes time to vote, they don't have the appropriate information, the appropriate identification to go out and exercise their vote—although they want to, right? But it becomes so troublesome for them that they then decide just not to do it, unless they happen to be going home.

Now, this time around, I think that in this federal election the advance polls are happening over Thanksgiving weekend, so hopefully many of these students will be going home to their own communities and they'll have an opportunity to vote over that Thanksgiving long weekend.

It's kind of disturbing that the federal government has in place put such harsh restrictions which really prohibit and make people refrain from going out to vote. Essentially, Speaker, the "unfair elections act" that was proposed by the federal government—they call it the Fair Elections Act, but it's the "unfair elections act." I used some of my time to highlight what some of those issues are, but it's not the only piece of legislation that hurts Canadian democracy.

A bill was passed that actually prohibits people who live abroad from voting. I think we probably saw it on the news: Donald Sutherland is a famous actor who is a beloved Canadian, an officer of the Order of Canada and a recipient of the Governor General's Award, but Donald Sutherland can't vote in Canada. Wayne Gretzky, another beloved Canadian—Walter's here to see us every year—cannot vote in Canada, right?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: He doesn't live here.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I know he doesn't live here, but certainly he is a Canadian, as is Donald Sutherland. Why shouldn't he be able to exercise their right to vote in this country?

I think it's clear that, federally, the Conservatives have a bad record when it comes to respecting our election laws. We saw that with the spending violations, with Dean Del Mastro and Peter Penashue. They simply cannot be trusted when it comes to enhancing our democracy, around voting and around spending limits in election campaigns.

I see some of the same behaviour from the party across the floor here, from the government across the floor. Just last week, the OPP laid criminal charges against a Liberal senior operative, Gerry Lougheed, in the Sudbury bribery scandal. That was about Andrew Olivier, and offering bribes to Andrew Olivier. Andrew was the candidate who actually had run in the 2014 campaign and wanted to run again in the by-election. Really, he did very well in the 2014 election. He wanted to run again but, instead, he was offered a bribe by a Liberal operative, who offered him a job or an appointment.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member is obviously raising an issue that is creating a response from the other side and I would caution her on her choice of words and ask her to confine her remarks to Bill 115.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you.

Another similarity, actually, between the federal issues that I discussed and the provincial Liberals—some of the more important things that we should be talking about as opposed to electoral boundaries—was the severe cuts that are being made to social programs and the cuts to our veterans. Yesterday, I was out at the Battle of Britain. It was their 75th anniversary. That was an epic battle that lasted three to four months during World War II. Basically, it was the entry into a successful outcome of that war. There were a number of veterans there who are in their nineties now, who were actually pilots during the Battle of Britain. They talked to me about veterans' issues and the lack of some of the services, the cuts to their services. These are people in their eighties and nineties.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Elgin—Middlesex—London on a point of order.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Yes, thanks, Speaker. I do think talking about Sudbury is more linked to this bill than talking about Canadian veterans, so I prefer you'd talk about Sudbury, please.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I return to the member for Welland, who has the floor.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I don't think that was a point of order, either.

But anyway, back to the veterans. These veterans have gone out and voted every time there is an election, whether it's a municipal election, a federal election, a provincial election. Clearly their message to me yesterday was that they're certainly feeling undervalued in their golden years. I think we should be dealing with some of these issues, certainly as a federal issue. I actually have a bill in to deal with veterans and long-term care that is sitting at a committee, that hasn't been dealt with. I'm hoping that someone who sits in the majority on one of these committees actually brings that bill up to the top so that here at a provincial level we can let our veterans know how much we value them and respect them.

I think that with changing the electoral boundaries, many ridings will be changing. Mine won't very much, as I let you know. But it does cause confusion to the

electorate. It also causes confusion to local representatives. And I can tell you, even with the St. Catharines riding—for example, I have a small strip of the south end of St. Catharines and I have people all the time say to me, "Oh, you're my MPP? I thought it was Mr. Bradley." Even though that boundary has been there for many, many years, the electorate still doesn't readily have that information available to them. I'm sure that the member from Kitchener—Waterloo—I was going to speak about the split in her riding, but I'll let her do that when she actually gets up to speak.

I think I've raised a lot of issues for people to contemplate over my 20 minutes and I hope that now that the act is open the government will be interested in looking at some amendments to make sure that we have the best possible voter turnout and the best accessibility for voters in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I just wanted to comment briefly on what this act, Bill 115, actually does. It's called the Electoral Boundaries Act.

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Back, I guess, at the end of the Harris government, the decision was made that instead of having our own electoral boundaries commission to look at how to redistribute ridings by population, we would just simply follow the federal boundaries. Of course, what has happened is that each time the federal government changes their boundaries, we once again then need to make the decision whether we should have our own provincial distribution, or whether we should simply follow the federal boundaries. What this bill represents is the very simple decision that we will, indeed, as a province, follow the federal boundaries. I would suggest that that actually, in some ways, addresses some of the concerns that the members have been raising.

It is no doubt confusing to constituents when the boundaries change. It's doubly confusing to constituents if the boundaries change, and they change differently federally and provincially. So while the inevitability is that populations move and some places get bigger and some places get smaller, and therefore redistribution must occur so that we can respect the principle of representation by population, this is actually the simplest way for the public to deal with that change. The exception is the northern ridings where all three parties, I think, agree that we will not redistribute them because they would just become impossibly huge for the members who represent them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: You know, Speaker, change can be difficult at times, and I'm certain that that's what we're seeing here. We're changing these boundaries. The federal government is changing these boundaries, so now the provincial government wants to do that. It's always an exciting time, I think, because now we're going to have more representation in the province for the numbers of people who are here.

I certainly agree with the member from Welland that Elections Ontario has its issues. I worked at polling stations over my lifetime and have spent countless hours changing addresses and identifying people because of wrong addresses. People would come in to vote, people who I knew lived in the riding all their lives. In fact, one year we had half of them, their addresses were in the Yukon, so we had to change them all. It was incredible. Of course, we have a little town called Alma in our riding. In the riding, we also have a township called Alma. I mean, these things can be confusing. I live in Perth county, and we have a member here who lives in the town of Perth, so these things happen. I can understand that Elections Ontario needs some help.

I want to address the issue about students not voting. They usually have a low turnout. Certainly, they're moving around to universities and they're living at universities or colleges at this time of year. But there's a thing called Google which I have gotten to know about. You can Google things and find out exactly just how things work. Now, my kids, certainly, are better versed in the computer business than I am, but it's not hard. They can find out everything there is to know about world with Google. If they want to vote, go to the Elections Ontario website, go to Google, whatever, and get it done. It's there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Listening closely to the member from Welland, I think that she raised a lot of issues that are obviously very current and very relevant for today's Legislature.

The bill, Bill 115, says this is an act to enact the Representation Act, 2015, repeal the Representation Act—as the member across has already pointed out—but it also amends the Election Act, the Election Finances Act and the Legislative Assembly Act, so there was an opportunity for this particular piece of legislation to incorporate the latest report from the electoral officers that was just submitted last January 2015. A report like this has never been done before. He says, “No Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario has ever conducted a regulatory investigation into allegations of bribery or ever reported an apparent contravention of the home statutes of my office to the Attorney General.”

This was a precedent-setting report. This is an opportunity for them to update and modernize—that's the language that gets used a lot around here—but even in his report he says that there were complaints about the way that his office dealt with concerns from the public. There were issues around the protocol of this office. There were some complaints around the overview of the investigation and how far-reaching it should have been.

These points were raised by the member from Welland because every time a piece of legislation comes to the floor of this House, we have a duty and a responsibility to raise those issues as they pertain to the legal concerns of the public and the public concerns in general; because every time something like what happened in Sudbury

happens, it compromises trust in the electoral system, it undermines the power of our democracy, and it does impact when people are going to vote.

I think that she did a very good job of presenting an overview, and I think this is a very relevant and current conversation to be having in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member from Ottawa—Orléans.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: It gives me great pleasure to speak about this bill again. I would like to thank the member from Welland and also the member from Perth—Wellington on some of the subjects that I would like to bring forward.

I used to own a retirement residence called Portobello Manor. When you talk about the ability to work with Elections Ontario and ensure that seniors actually go and vote, what we did at our site was that, because of the no pictures and no permanent address, no current driver's licence—Elections Ontario allowed our seniors to actually come to vote with a card, a business card that we created. On the back of the card we had a certification—“I solemnly swear”—where every resident had their picture, their permanent address; and as the owner of this property, I was able to sign. We laminated them. Every single senior was able to come and vote on the day. I wanted to share the importance of seniors and also our youth voting, but there are ways that we can help create—that is one thing that I was most proud to do when I was the general manager of the retirement residence in Orléans, Portobello Manor.

Having said that, I also know that it's growth: This bill is about the fact that we need representation from people of our community to ensure that we can best represent them here. Certainly, for me, living in Orléans, every day I turn around there is a new development. Having these boundaries will significantly improve the life of some residents who sometimes had to have representation from further away. My boundaries are not being split like other members', but certainly my boundaries are changing to reflect the federal boundaries.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member from Welland has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Just to recap, I don't think that election boundaries should just be about numbers. They should include things like municipal, regional planning, transportation corridors, services such as busing. It should be about accessibility, whether it is for disability issues or whether it is because you are a senior or a youth. I raised the issue about voter cards and about the denial of access into apartment buildings and condominiums, which should be a huge problem here in downtown Toronto where there are 1.3 million people, I think, living in condos, the vast majority of them here in the city of Toronto.

When I talk about geography—I heard some of the members talking about smaller geographic areas. The member from Kenora—Rainy River I think has the largest riding here in the province. It is so large that it is impossible for her to get to every municipality, every

reserve in her riding in a year, let alone in the term. But there aren't any special considerations for that, and that is something that should be looked at as well by the Legislature and perhaps by Elections Ontario.

1700

At the end of the day, I think that this should all be about democracy and about encouraging people to get out and vote. If we can address some of the issues in this legislation that I raised today and that many other members raised in their speeches, then we'll have a much more democratic province, and we'll have a lot more people weighing in to that process.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I'm delighted to rise in support of Bill 115, the Electoral Boundaries Act. I will be sharing my time with the Minister of Transportation, the member for Kitchener Centre, and the member for York South-Weston.

I think we in this House can all agree that the basic precept of this bill is fair representation. Representation by population is essentially the basic principle on which our democratic institution, this Legislature, is based.

As many members have said, my riding, the great riding of Oak Ridges-Markham, is the largest by population in the country, let alone the province, with a population that we estimate at this time as over 250,000, which is larger than the whole province of Prince Edward Island. In fact, the number of electors in the last general election, 2014, from my riding was 177,255, closely followed by my colleague the member for Vaughan, who had some 136,426 electors in the last election.

Just recently, in going to Canada Post to send out my householder, I had 77,000 households that I had to send it out to—on the same global budget, I will mention, as every other member. So there are severe constraints on my ability to truly represent all the residents of my riding.

This is very true for many of us in York region. We will be moving, in York region, from essentially six and a half ridings to eight and a half—we share one with Simcoe county—so we're gaining two ridings. When October 20 comes around, after the federal election a month or so from now, I will have four MPs who will be representing my constituents. I anticipate that, no doubt, we will all do a great job representing our constituents. But this is in fact going to be a complicated process for all of us.

Some references have been made to the electoral boundaries commission that actually established the federal boundaries a couple of years ago and that we are following, with the exception, of course, of the north. I did attend the electoral boundaries commission to talk about some of the issues the member for Welland raised, those of community of interest. I found that they had an excellent, open process in terms of looking to adjust the boundaries, based on their consultation. I found it a very fair process.

I was able to argue for the maintenance of the old core of the original town of Markham, established in 1825, that that historical centre be kept together. Another issue is that many people didn't want to see the name of the new riding of Aurora-Richmond Hill that was proposed, that there be the maintenance of the term "Oak Ridges," so that the new riding is Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill, because we would not want to lose that important reference to the moraine.

The process, I think, was a very good one. I think it makes tremendous sense that we follow these federal boundaries and that we do it quite rapidly, in time, obviously, for the next election.

We are establishing with this act that these boundaries will take effect and be in place for the next provincial election. Should a by-election be required as of December 1, 2016, they will still be with the current boundaries.

We've got important recommendations that embody the principle of representation by population. I think we should all be very supportive of these. I think that my constituents will welcome these changes and consistency with the federal boundaries, so that there's no further confusion. I urge all members of this House clearly to support this bill. It's important, and it's timely.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Next I recognize the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm delighted to have the opportunity to speak, of course in strong support of the matter we are discussing in the chamber this afternoon, Bill 115, the Electoral Boundaries Act, here at second reading. I'm also delighted to follow my good friend and colleague and, I would assert, geographical neighbour, the member from Oak Ridges-Markham, who also serves as Minister of Community and Social Services. As she mentioned, we are sharing time with some of our other colleagues this afternoon.

As I listen to the discussion of this bill on all sides of the House this afternoon, it's encouraging to see, on a matter that strikes right at the heart of our electoral democracy, that we are all doing a good job of putting partisanship aside. That's fascinating to see, and very encouraging as well.

But I wanted to actually pick up on a point that the previous member, the Minister of Community and Social Services, spoke to. She talked about the size, scope and breadth of her own electoral district of Oak Ridges-Markham, a wonderful community that literally abuts my riding of Vaughan. What she didn't mention, as she was talking about all the numbers in her riding, is that I believe, if I'm not mistaken, that this particular member received the largest number of votes in her community than in any electoral district during the last election campaign.

Of course, it should go without saying that everyone in this chamber would know about this member that this is because of her hard work, her tenacity and her advocacy for her community. But in many respects it also speaks to the fact that this is a very necessary move on the part of this government, and on the part of this Legislature, to

reconsider exactly how we draw these boundaries, to make sure that people living right across the province, but I would say particularly in fast-growing regions and communities like those that exist in York region, Peel, Durham and elsewhere—that those individuals, those families, those businesses have an equitable approach to the representation they have.

There are many, many challenges that individuals face in the communities we all represent. To make sure that we have numbers of representatives that are not only equitable but also fair, in terms of giving those individuals a voice here in this chamber as we debate, discuss, pass legislation and govern, is extremely important. So I'm very happy, Speaker, to lend my voice to this.

I had the chance, going back a number of years before I was elected to serve in this Legislature, to witness some of the other redistribution efforts that occurred. Of course, I know there has been some discussion here this afternoon about the big move that took place a number of years ago, when this Legislature went from, I believe, 130 seats down to 99 seats. That was a very large transformational move. There have been other adjustments that have occurred since that time.

But I think it is important to note, and I said it at the outset of my comments this afternoon, when you hear discussions on all sides of the House, from all three parties, all three caucuses, that even though there are, at least from what I have heard so far on this bill, some suggestions around things that should perhaps be tweaked or reconsidered—not in a fundamental way, of course, but around the margins with respect to this legislation—I think it is very clear that there is broad support for moving forward with this particular bill.

There will, of course, be additional adjustments that are brought to bear throughout the rest of the legislative process, and that is perfectly reasonable, as happens with much, if not all, the legislation that comes through this place. But it is fundamental for those we represent, whether it's in York region or in other parts of the province—the notion that we would retain what I'll call that extra seat, that 11th seat in northern Ontario, is obviously something very, very important to those individuals who live in the north.

We've heard a lot of arguments here this afternoon in terms of the ability for all of us to interact with our federal counterparts for what I'll call clarity of understanding for those we represent, so that they know they are represented by the same individuals with the same boundaries, so there's a great deal less confusion around matters like that. When you look at the totality of this bill and this legislation, and what we are undertaking with respect to making sure we get it right and move our provincial democracy forward in the most effective way possible, I believe that all members will join with us, certainly in the discussion we've seen so far here today, again understanding that there are some fairly nuanced differences of opinion around some of the specific matters. But broadly speaking, we all want to get on with the task at hand, which is to make sure that we have the most effective,

most representative government serving, here in this chamber, all of the electoral districts across the province of Ontario.

1710

Speaking as the MPP for Vaughan, representing a fast-growing community, as much as I love serving all of Vaughan, Woodbridge, Kleinburg and Maple—and I know that may change over time if we pass this legislation—it is the right thing to do. It's the right thing to do for our fast-growing communities. It's the right thing to do for the entire province. I'm very happy to support this bill this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'm very pleased to join the discussion today on Bill 115, the electoral boundaries election reform act.

In my riding, Mr. Speaker—I know you're familiar with it because you live close by—in Kitchener Centre, we are mainly an urban constituency. In recent years, we have experienced a tremendous amount of growth, and we continue to grow in my riding.

We have two large new condo developments that are going up in downtown Kitchener. If you were in the House a couple of days ago, you might have heard me speaking to this. One of them is going up at the corner of Victoria and King. There is another one just a few blocks away from there, still on King Street, near city hall—another very large development going up. This one is called the City Centre condo. We're going to see thousands of people moving into downtown Kitchener.

We want to make certain that people in Kitchener are adequately represented. My constituency office is just a few blocks away from there, and I will tell you that I get about 200 inquiries every day—people who are calling, people who are emailing and people who are walking in. I know I've compared notes with some of my colleagues to find out how many inquiries they get every day. We hear about these large numbers.

We want to be able to respond to people in a very timely and effective manner. When we have these very large ridings with high populations, sometimes it becomes very challenging to do that. By adjusting our provincial boundaries to meet this shifting growth that we see in the province, it's going to make certain that all people in Ontario are going to be fairly and effectively represented.

Recently, I was very fortunate to attend an eastern leadership conference event that took place in Philadelphia. This was in August. People there were very excited as they were preparing for a visit from Pope Francis. I was very excited too because it gave me a chance to compare notes with some of the other legislators who were there. Mr. Speaker, your own colleague from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound was in attendance. There were only two of us there from Ontario; the rest were from Quebec, Nova Scotia and the eastern US states, places like New Jersey, Maine and New York.

Asking some of these other legislators, the Canadians, what their ridings were like—I asked a particular member from Nova Scotia how many people he was representing in his riding. He said 14,000, and my jaw dropped. I was quite envious. He said, “How many do you have in your riding?” I said, “Well, in Kitchener Centre, I have 120,000.” But when I hear my colleague the Minister of Social Services talk about 250,000, I guess I can’t hold a candle to you. That’s an awful lot of constituents you are trying to represent.

In my riding, I am seeing the southeast corner being shaved off as we see the creation of Kitchener South–Hespeler; you’ve heard mention of this. Considering the growth that is occurring in the core of Kitchener—I’ve mentioned this—this makes great sense. Again, it’s a capacity issue. We want to make sure that we are there to help people effectively and in a timely manner. When somebody calls or emails or walks in off the street and needs help, we want to be able to answer their questions quickly and effectively.

We are adding 15 new seats based on the new federal boundaries. Having provincial and federal boundaries that are similar is going to cause less confusion for voters.

Here are a few facts for you, for people at home who are watching and who want to know how this is going to work: If this bill is passed, consider that the new provincial boundaries are going to take effect after the first dissolution of the Legislature after November 30 of next year, 2016. The new boundaries will be in place by the next election in 2018. Any by-elections that may happen between now and then—and Mr. Speaker, you never know when that’s going to happen—we’re going to base on the current electoral map.

We’ve been asked how much this is going to cost. We’re looking at \$8.8 million to create 15 new ridings, and this is going to mean hiring more staff, renting offices, getting equipment such as accessible voting machines.

This is not a complicated bill. We want to strengthen our democracy. We want to provide effective representation for our constituents right across Ontario. We want to streamline provincial boundaries with federal boundaries. I might say to you, Mr. Speaker, that I’m happy to see my seat shrinking, but I won’t say that because it sounds a bit peculiar to say that. So I will leave it at that. I know some of you are seeing your seats shrinking too.

Interjection.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: It’s a bit peculiar.

I will be supporting Bill 115 and I strongly recommend that my fellow legislators do as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for York South–Weston.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m pleased to add my voice and to make a few comments on Bill 115, the electoral boundaries reform act. As we’ve heard this afternoon, this is a very important bill because it really highlights how the residents of Ontario will be represented here at the provincial level of government,

how they can be represented adequately, with fairness and in an effective way.

These boundaries we are considering were recommended by the federal boundaries commission. At that time, I did present a deputation. My riding’s boundaries are staying the same, although we do have a growing number of residents. I advocated to maintain the existing boundaries, because one part was to be sectioned off. My riding, as are many other ridings, is defined by what are called natural boundaries: rivers, highways, railways. The part that was to be added to another riding really wouldn’t have any access to that other riding. In other words, the residents go to school, they shop, they have their places of worship and all their transportation connections all on the side of the riding that they are next to right now. It wouldn’t have any of those connections with the new boundary, so I, together with other local elected officials, advocated to maintain these existing boundaries.

So, yes, it will be a challenge to continue to represent the residents in an effective manner, because we do have a growing population, thanks mainly to the infrastructure projects that are being built by our provincial government in my riding: projects such as the expansion of the Georgetown South line, the UP Express, the Eglinton Crosstown and the new Humber River Hospital that is being built just north of the riding. This is bringing new development to the area and, therefore, we will need to be very vigilant in order to service our constituents well.

My riding has many needs. I remember when I was first elected many years ago, speaking to one of my colleagues, I asked, “How many ODSP cases do you deal with in a week?” The other member answered, “In a week? Well, probably one or two a year.” We have at least a dozen a week that we’re dealing with. Our ridings are very different. This is what is great about Ontario, that our constituencies are so vast and so different. But they need to be attended to each one in its own way.

I also wanted to add two comments to what the member for Scarborough–Rouge River brought up and that is the electoral list. In my riding we have many residents who move; the turnaround is quite extensive from election to election and Elections Ontario will need to keep up with that. We need verification. We need quality checks in this regard. It is beneficial overall, I think, to keep the same boundaries as the federal government except for the North, which needs different attention, but at the same time, the lists would be very beneficial to try to keep track of that. That’s why I also support the provision in this bill to allow provisional registration of 16- and 17-year-olds, as recommended by the Chief Electoral Officer, because it will encourage more people to vote and also it would be easier for us to keep track of them.

1720

These are some of the reasons that I will be wholeheartedly supporting Bill 115.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to rise once again to discuss this government bill, one that obviously is supported by our party, the Progressive Conservatives, with particular respect to boundary redefinition.

I'd like to compliment the members opposite, particularly from the high-growth areas, for understanding the need for effective representation and equal representation for all of our constituents. As I mentioned previously today, there are 146,000 people who reside in the province of Prince Edward Island. In fact, as the member for Nepean–Carleton, as of 2011 we had 159,000 people living in my constituency, and it has continued to grow over the past four years.

I know there are many members here who are going to see their riding split in two, as mine will. Nepean–Carleton will become two distinct ridings, Nepean and Carleton, three weeks from today. Therefore, we will have two federal members and only one provincial member.

That brings me, Speaker, to something I believe the Board of Internal Economy should be looking at. I know my colleague from Kitchener–Conestoga and I will be drafting a letter to them and to members of this assembly to ensure that constituents in the provincial riding are treated as fairly as federal constituents, and we'll be asking for support from those members. I know the Minister of Community and Social Services spoke earlier about the high cost for us to communicate with our constituents, particularly by mail.

I just believe we need fair and open representation. We do need to support this legislation, but let's not forget for the next two and a half to three years the cost it will have on us representing our constituents in our communities.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's indeed a pleasure to stand in the House this afternoon and make comments on what has been said already by the Minister of Community and Social Services, the Minister of Transportation and the members from Kitchener Centre and York South–Weston.

I was just trying to do a bit of math in my head. The member from Kitchener Centre said she gets 200 calls a day, or emails or people dropping in. There's only eight hours in the day, 480 minutes, so every two minutes—you must have a staff of 10. I have two full-time people and one half-time person. We get a lot of people coming in, but we can't deal with them in two minutes. It takes sometimes half an hour for the people dropping in, sometimes longer. But emails have to be answered; phone calls have to be listened to and returned. You have to do follow-ups. Either your people should join a union or you should hire more if they're working that hard for those eight hours a day.

The member from Nepean–Carleton—a shout-out to everybody from Prince Edward Island, because we're always talking about them. They have four MPs. They also have four senators. You forgot to mention that one. I know you have a lot of friends in the Senate.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: We don't talk about the Senate any more in the Tory party.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: You don't. Yes, you don't.

I just have to tell you that in Windsor, we went through a boundary adjustment municipally. We went from five wards with two members to 10 wards with one. We had a bit of a fight over that, but it finally worked itself out. But when I voted municipally in the last municipal election, they used these rented machines. Well, they came from the United States of America, so after you put your ballot in, up comes this big American flag that says, "Thank you for voting."

Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments?

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: I'm pleased to be able to rise and speak to this bill as well. I know it's very important for many folks in this room and, of course, for the citizens we represent right across our great province. I think I'm going to speak specifically to northern Ontario and the 11 ridings that we're keeping in the North which I think are truly important.

As we always try to explain, Sudbury—I'm kind of an urban MPP. I represent solely the city, provincially. As it's been explained, I'm the Timbit, and my colleague who represents the riding of Nickel Belt is the doughnut. But that doughnut is quite large. If you think about the size of that riding—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Now that's a visual.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: I'm glad you like the visual.

The size of that riding, provincially, is still quite large; federally, it's even bigger.

We're talking about, in northern Ontario, some different communities of interest. If you're looking at the riding that my friend from Timiskaming–Cochrane represents, you've got the Clay Belt going up there. There's a lot of talk now about farming in that area, and that's great.

Mr. John Vanthof: More than talk.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: More than talk, as he reminds me, which is fantastic. But two or three hours away, in Sudbury, we talk a lot about mining. But in northern Ontario, you would then have to drive another 12 hours to get to the area of Thunder Bay. And then I think, if you even put it into perspective, you have to drive another four or five hours from Thunder Bay to get to Kenora. To try to start saying that, as MPPs, you need to be able to charter planes on a regular basis to get to see these people that you need to represent is something that, I think—by keeping the 11 seats, we're allowing for at least the voices to be heard of those in the North. And that's the key thing here: that we keep talking about the voices of the people of Ontario and being able to represent them here in this place, which is something I know all of us cherish.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: We are here to speak about Bill 115, which is the realignment of some of the boundaries

of some of the ridings in Ontario to facilitate an enhanced democracy, as it should be; to recognize that some areas are growing. Our population is growing and, really, what I would like to speak to you about is democracy itself, because I think we are speaking pretty thoroughly about the bill and the fairly simple concept of addressing increasing population.

Democracy is the finest form of government that we have in the world. It provides us here in Ontario and in this country, and in western nations, with freedom, and freedom provides us with the opportunity to live and work in a free land; the opportunity to work and create the wealth we need to raise our families, to live in our communities and to build the wonderful country that we call Canada.

But freedom is never free. It is something that is hard won. It has been fought for in this country and in faraway lands by our soldiers in wars and on battlefields over past centuries, and debated in Parliaments such as this one over those same centuries. It is defined and preserved here by this House, by those of us who have the privilege to be here, by our Constitution, by our Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the fact that we are a land of law and order, to ensure that those rights and privileges that give us the opportunity and the freedom that we enjoy in this world are preserved for all.

Freedom is part of our British Christian heritage that dates back to the Magna Carta of 1215. It's something we should all be very proud of—certainly, I am—and remember where we came from with freedom and our Constitution, and that democracy is something that is greatly valued—and we should continue to value—and that we use to protect and preserve our freedom. That's what it's all about here today, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Transportation can reply.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to begin again by thanking, on this side of the House, those who shared time—obviously, the Minister of Community and Social Services, the member from Kitchener Centre and the member from York South–Weston, who spoke; in addition, the members from Nepean–Carleton, Windsor–Tecumseh and Sudbury, and last but certainly not least, the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills. I want to thank them all for their comments with respect to this important legislation. I want to thank them somewhat on behalf of the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs for making sure that, here this afternoon in this very important place, in this very important discussion, we avoided bluster, and we avoided—I believe “bloviating” is the other term. There was a sincere lack of bloviating on the part of all members on this very important topic.

1730

I know that there will be lots of other discussion and debate that will occur here this afternoon for the next approximately 30 minutes and certainly tomorrow. I'm not sure how much longer this entire chamber and all of the members who worked so hard to represent their communities in this place can avoid that unfortunate double-

barrelled combination of both bluster and bloviating. But I know, Speaker, that on this side, we are sincerely hopeful that we will continue to take this discussion very seriously, and we'll continue to press ahead with Bill 115, which is important for all the members, for all of the individuals whom we represent.

I want to finish up by referencing the member from Windsor–Tecumseh and the wonderful story that he shared with us about getting that notification. Of course, thank you for voting. That goes right to the heart of this entire idea. We are here to represent the people who sent us here. We do it with dedication, we do it with grace, and, once in a while, we do it with a little bit of levity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before I ask for further debate, I think I have to rule on this important matter. The Speaker tries very hard to be tolerant. I would hesitate to accuse any member of bloviating during debate, but even if they did, there is very little the Speaker can do as there is no reference to that particular activity in the standing orders.

Further debate? The member for Elgin–Middlesex–London.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you very much, Speaker. I am quite sure that you were not bloviating during that time period.

I'm very pleased to have the chance to speak to Bill 115, the Electoral Boundaries Act, the act that will repeal the Representation Act, 2005, and amend the Election Act, the Election Finances Act and the Legislative Assembly Act. This is basically a redistribution that comes immediately into effect following the first dissolution of the Legislature after November 30, 2016. With it, this legislation is going to create 15 new ridings which will match the federal ridings.

I do have to point out, though, that I'm glad to support that they did fix this to the northern ridings in order to ensure that they're properly represented, and not under-represented with the changes that may have occurred if they had totally copied the federal way. In saying that, the 11 ridings in the North will stay untouched: that's Algoma–Manitoulin, Kenora–Rainy River, Nickel Belt, Nipissing, Parry Sound–Muskoka, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, Thunder Bay–Atikokan, Thunder Bay–Superior North, Timiskaming–Cochrane, and Timmins–James Bay.

In fact, it spells it out for each area in this legislation, detailing the northern areas and how they're the same. So Sudbury, for instance, is consisting of “that part of the former city of Sudbury (as existed on December 31, 1996), lying north of a line described as follows: commencing at the intersection of the east limit of said former city and Highway No. 69; thence westerly along said highway to Long Lake Road; thence southerly along said road to the north limit of the geographic township of Broder; thence westerly along the north limit of said geographic township to the west limit of said former city.”

I think how they laid out Sudbury deals with the redistribution; however, they had the opportunity to

actually take a look at Sudbury closer and ensure that at the next election in the Sudbury region there is nobody from the Premier's office, allegedly under her ideas, bribing the candidates so they do not run. It's unfortunate that we have to go through this in this Legislature, when in fact we are dealing with electoral reform, which is basically copying what the federal government has done—minus the northern part—but everything else is not being dealt with. It's unfortunate, and it's a sad day in democracy when we have to have an OPP charge on top of this government to deal with election fraud.

These newly created ridings in Ontario reflect the growth in population that we have seen in many communities over the years. It's essential that all Ontarians are democratically represented.

I'm happy that this bill is going forward. After the hard work the federal government has done, this Liberal government was able to copy and paste what the federal government had done over two years of work. I do have to say, my MP, Joe Preston, was chair of the procedure committee in Ottawa, and Joe did a wonderful job guiding this bill through the Legislature. Joe is retiring after 11 years of hard work representing the people of Elgin-Middlesex-London. We wish him well as he heads off to retirement.

In my riding of Elgin-Middlesex-London, my boundaries change a little. I will be losing a little bit of south London near the White Oaks area. That part of the riding will be going over to London-Fanshawe, which is represented right now by Teresa Armstrong. I have really enjoyed dealing with the White Oaks area during my time, and it's unfortunate that I will be losing them. However, I will continue to represent the people of my riding to the best of my abilities.

My change is pretty minute compared to some of the ridings that are undergoing massive change: As the member from Nepean-Carleton has said, it's basically being split into Nepean and Carleton—and a member on the government side representing 250,000 people, which is quite a large task to do, and they will be better represented.

However, the other point that I have to make is that it's not just dealing with the people you represent; it's also dealing with the municipalities. Some ridings deal with one municipality and are able to work well with them. In my riding, I deal with 10 municipalities, and after the redistribution, I'll continue to work with 10 municipalities. I have the city of London, the city of St. Thomas, the municipality of West Elgin, the municipality of Dutton Dunwich, Central Elgin, Aylmer, Malahide, Bayham, Southwold and, of course, Thames Centre. I will continue to work with those municipalities to the fullest of my abilities. So it's not always based on the fact of the people you serve; it's also the lower level of government that you also are serving. It would be interesting to find out how that is changing in the redistribution of the ridings and if there's an increase in the amount of municipalities that members have to work with.

I enjoy very much representing my riding of Elgin-Middlesex-London; I've lived there my entire life. Back in 1999, before the first of many changes occurred, it was basically the riding of Elgin. I can just imagine the conversations they had when they discussed expanding it to Elgin-Middlesex-London for the first time. You're moving outside of Elgin county into Middlesex county and south of London. The task, they must have thought, of having to cover those areas—but I tell you, I've enjoyed every moment of getting across the three different parts of my riding and getting to know the people that live there and working to the betterment of Ontario together.

Constituency problems are different but the same throughout our communities. As I've mentioned before, the 10 different municipalities that I deal with, although we do have some common goals—like the majority of my municipalities are against the Green Energy Act crusade because they have lost the ability to make decisions as to whether or not they get windmills or solar panels—there are other discrepancies in my municipalities. For instance, the majority of my municipalities, outside of London, have been cut from OMPF funding for the last few years, which was pretty drastic to their ability to budget accordingly for the next year. However, I do have a municipality that has benefited and grown under the OMPF. So representing here at the Legislature, where the majority of my members have been hurt by the cuts to the OMPF, I have one that benefited. I do take the task very seriously in balancing how I represent all municipalities and all people in my riding. I find it quite interesting the differences in the way we are able to do so.

What was also brought up today, and I found quite interesting, is that the government talked about in their one-hour address earlier, which lasted 15 minutes, the fact that they're looking to start to collect information on 16- and 17-year-olds, pre-register them so that they're getting information to be interested in voting, so that when they do turn 18, they're more apt to vote. I applaud anything that would help our youth to vote.

I think another solution that the Minister of Education has is taking a look at our curriculum and seeing how we can change the civics classes in grades 5 and 10, or maybe even expanding more so and somehow forming an all-party committee in our areas that we represent and perhaps engaging in the schools—not just in those two grade levels but across the spectrum so they get used to understanding how the electoral system works in Ontario, and so they understand what a member of provincial Parliament does, they understand what the Speaker of the House does, and they understand the importance of government opposition and why it's important that they're not always on the same page, so that they're challenging one another continually for the betterment of Ontario.

I think maybe, in addition to sending them mail—are they all going to read that, or is it going straight to the blue box?—engaging them at the school so that they encourage themselves to grow with the electoral system

so that at the end of the day, when they turn 18, they are ready to vote for them, they want to vote for them—I'm hoping perhaps we can work towards improving our curriculum in that sense.

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I know that, Probably like everyone else in the Legislature, I visit grade 5 classes and high school classes that talk about civics. It opens up a great discussion. There are those students in there that are very keen on knowing more about the system. There are others that haven't really thought about it, but when you leave the classroom they have a good idea about how the system works.

It's very interesting that they talk about creating and collecting the data. I hope the data that they do collect is used appropriately and not used to send out government propaganda in the short term. I hope non-partisan information is sent out so that they learn about the system. That's waiting to be seen, going forward.

What's also interesting about this legislation—I mentioned it earlier. It's getting a lot of debate, and it's fine to have a lot of debate. Hopefully, in committee, it tours around the province so that they can hear the considerations that the member from Nepean—Carleton has brought up numerous times. But it's missing some items and maybe it could have been a better bill if we had added more into the discussion. It's not unheard of: this government adding more to a simple bill to make a better piece of legislation.

A few weeks ago, our member from Lanark—Frontenac—did I get it right?—Randy Hillier, came out with his recall legislation bill. Now, we don't all have to agree on recall legislation. I think there are some very good points that Randy brought forward. Perhaps the numbers were the deciding factor as to why the bill was defeated here in the Legislature, but the recall legislation would allow for constituents to recall their MPP if they are not doing their job. They are protected for the first year after an election and the year before an election. Maybe it's the percentage of signatures that they do have to collect in order to enact the recall legislation. I mean, the province of BC has this legislation intact, and it seems to be going well. We have seen in the United States where it worked before. It got rid of California Governor Jerry Brown, which brought in Arnold Schwarzenegger, but also in Wisconsin when they tried to pull out Governor Scott Walker; however, he was re-elected again. So we've seen both utilizations of this recall legislation used. Maybe it was something that could have been added in here; maybe we could have had more discussion about it, to strengthen up the bill and deal with electoral reform much better than we've done before.

However, the other thing I've also discussed earlier was third-party advertising. This was a great opportunity. The government talked about it in their budget, that they would consider changes to third-party advertising, but this was the opportunity. Six months after the budget passed, they have a piece of electoral reform to actually do more than what they're doing, to not prevaricate

around the issue, to go forward and actually put it into legislation. In 2007, third-party advertising was \$2.3 million; in 2011, third-party advertising was \$6.7 million; in 2014, it hit almost \$9 million. You see the upward climb. You see where it's going. Not that third-party advertising is being non-partisan in any way; it's turning into personal destruction of people who have put their careers, their lives, into doing their job. To think that we are allowing almost \$10 million to be spent to destroy people I think is sick. I think it's disgusting, and I think this government had an opportunity to fix electoral reform.

Look at the federal government. The federal government has capped spending at \$188,000. They've also prevented donations from corporations and unions; they let the people donate. I don't see why we couldn't look at changing the system so that the \$9 million that is spent, mostly without the choice of many of the members who donate the money, or who have the money taken from them—instead, maybe that money can go back to the members, who can donate to the party that they wish to and get rid of the terrible rhetoric that goes on. You look at the States and what they're going through, and it's only going to get worse, too.

I think the whole idea of how money is used inappropriately in this province to push issues—leave it up to the individual members running in each riding, and our leaders of each party, to debate it out. Actually have true, honest debate that speaks to the issues, as opposed to relying on some third-party group to spend millions upon millions of dollars to go personally at candidates.

I'm sorry, I think the government missed the boat on this. It has been six months since the budget. It's electoral reforms; it's not like we have too many electoral reform items at the Legislature. But instead, we've missed the boat, and we're going to have to wait for another electoral reform. They say they're considering it. What does that mean? There's no action behind those words.

I think the legislation is good. We support the legislation. We're glad they're taking care of northern Ontario. But they've missed the opportunity to make true, substantive changes to how the people of Ontario view politics and vote.

Hopefully, they're able to go forward and fix this legislation. Maybe in committee we can make some changes that fix it. Right now, if you did a poll of people throughout this province on what their thoughts are on politics and politicians, I bet you we'd be pretty low, with what's going on. I mean, you look. We have a government here with four OPP investigations open against them. We have one that turned out a charge that will be going to the courts.

I think that at the end of the day Ontarians deserve better. They deserve a government that's in it for the people as opposed to in it for themselves. It clearly shows, when they come up with an electoral reform like Bill 115, that they're more in the line of saying, "We've changed for democracy." Well, they've taken a piece of

legislation that the federal government took two years to create, and copied and pasted it, made the amendments to northern Ontario and passed it on, which is fine; that needed to be done. However, they've had more than enough time to make the changes I've suggested. I'm sure there are quite a few more changes that other members of this Legislature have to improve democracy in Ontario. I think that would have been the time to do so.

I wouldn't say this bill is being rushed, but we do have time before November 2016 to make the changes that—we could have had good discussion amongst the members to come up with a more substantive bill, something that we could have really worked at, taken around the province and come up with ideas for making Ontario a better place to vote and be a participant.

Maybe then, at the end of the day, voter turnout would be increased, if there's better opportunity. Maybe the younger vote would turn out more. I mean, collecting their names at 16 and 17 and sending them mailings will help. Will it help a lot? We don't know. We don't know what they're going to be taking in of what they read. Maybe, perhaps, social media is the way to go, going forward.

However, we're hoping that, through the committee process, the government will take a look at some of the ideas we've put forth, and what's coming forth from the public, and take this around Ontario. Take it into northern Ontario. Let them have their say on what they think of the ridings as they are. Take it to areas like Oak Ridges–Markham or Nepean–Carleton to hear what their concerns are with the fact that there will be multiple MPs per one MPP.

I could just imagine the federal government coming out with an announcement, and that MPP having to attend the same announcement in three different areas of their riding, even though they're three different MPs. That will be interesting to play out at the end of the day.

I'm glad I've had the opportunity to speak to this legislation, and I look forward to the questions and comments coming forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to comment on the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London as it relates to Bill 115. He has pointed out, obviously, that this is a response to what the federal government has done. He made mention that the northern ridings will be kept intact, with the one extra riding. It's worth noting, though, that some ridings—Algoma–Manitoulin currently has 37 municipalities as part of that riding, 21 First Nations, 15 local service boards—86,000 square kilometres. This is a riding the size of France, Belgium and, for good measure, Switzerland, and it's served by one MPP.

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With every piece of legislation that comes before us, we have the ability to comment on some of the weaknesses and the gaps in it. I think people expect people to

award the government for sort of holding the line in the north, but that's a big riding. You have to take in geography and you have to take in demographics, obviously.

Another missed opportunity with this particular legislation is addressing the rights of the homeless. This is a growing issue. There's a growing number of homeless people, and they still have the right to vote. Why not put it in a piece of legislation and protect their rights? What about the issues around students who do want to vote? Why don't we make it clear what the rules of engagement are for students to cast their ballots. If anybody should be concerned about where this province and country are going, it should be students, who are paying the highest tuition rates across the country.

For me, it's just a missed opportunity. When the electoral officers submitted their report around the apparent contraventions of the Election Act, this document was precedent-setting. It was an opportunity for the government to look at how complaints are dealt with at that office and then address it in Bill 115. It was a missed opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I'm happy to have a couple of minutes on Bill 115, which is basically confirming that the province of Ontario will be following the federal redistribution and creating 15 more ridings in the province of Ontario.

Speaker, I must say, I remember very clearly a piece of legislation that we brought into the House—2004, 2005 or 2006; I can't remember when the last redistribution occurred—which confirmed and legislatively assured that there would remain no fewer than 11 northern ridings at any time. The reason we did that legislatively was that the previously government, the Conservative government of Mike Harris, had reduced the northern ridings from 15 down to 11. Under the last federal redistribution, had we followed that, the north would have lost one further seat. We would have gone from 11 to 10. So just to put on the record, we've been very strong on that. Eleven is the lowest it can go unless someone chooses to alter that particular legislation.

I have a northern riding. I don't feel in any way aggrieved by the fact that I have a northern riding. It's large, but it's not that large. Two hours or two hours and 15 minutes to the westernmost part of my riding—seven different municipalities in the riding, local roads boards, local services boards. You service them with your constituency offices. I've had a constituency office in Atikokan. The other five municipalities are very close around the city of Thunder Bay; Oliver, Paipoonge, O'Connor, Gillies, Conmee and Neebing are close. Atikokan's the farthest to the west. It's not as difficult, perhaps, as you might think. We've got great people in those ridings who help us on the ground, and I really don't feel that same challenge that's been expressed by others in terms of having an ability to adequately service and make sure people are well represented. It requires a

bit of travel, but it's not as terrible as some might make you think. We all have our challenges.

Population is a raw number. It creates its own challenges from a budgetary perspective, as we've heard, and in terms of seeing as many people as you can, as well.

Good ridings—we're proud of having maintained the 11 northern ridings through legislation some time ago.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's certainly a pleasure to stand up and make comments on the speech given by the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London, who I know most people in this Legislature love listening to. He's clear, concise and gets to the point, which I appreciate. He brought up many good ideas and these ideas, certainly when this gets to committee, should be addressed.

This province is unusual, actually, compared to the United States or compared to other countries. It's so big. This province is so big. People come here and they want to see Ontario, and they take a day if they come from another country. We all know you can't see Ontario in a day. It takes a couple of days to drive from one side to the other, so it's difficult, I'm sure.

Something that the government should do is face the fact that it is different. Ridings can't be judged just from a population base; size certainly enters into it. I know, in my riding of Perth–Wellington, it's about two hours from one to the other, which isn't big. I know some of the ridings up north—

Mr. Michael Harris: Six hours by horse and buggy.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: —are further than that. My friend over here just made a comment I won't talk about.

Anyway, I think the federal government recognized this when they made the boundary changes. There are certain areas of the province that should have more members and other parts of the province that should stay the same. When this bill passes, I think it will certainly help improve the representation that we have in this Legislature for the people of the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It is indeed a pleasure to speak on what was just said by the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London.

I must start off by thinking about what was said previously by the Minister of Transportation, who was saying you need a sense of humour in this House.

When the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London first started, I hearkened back to the definition of “bloviate,” which was “talk at length, especially in an inflated or empty way,” because he spent a lot of his time talking about third-party advertising, which I found interesting, because he didn't mention the millions of

dollars that the Harper Conservative government is spending on advertising in this campaign so far.

I said to myself, “Perhaps it's not a third party. It's the government. Perhaps it's possible that he just wasn't ready to speak about the boundary changes.”

But he does have nice hair, though. I couldn't turn that down, right? I mean, it was there; it was in front of me. The Minister of Transportation feels the same, I know.

It's funny: The member from Perth–Wellington was saying that you can't see all of Ontario in a day. I come from Windsor–Tecumseh. When I used to cover city hall, I'd be down around the tourist bureau. Americans would come over, and they would go into the tourist bureau and say, “Well, we're going to Halifax today and then we want to go up and see the igloos up north tomorrow, before we go back to Detroit.” There's a great misunderstanding of how big the country of Canada is, let alone how big Ontario is, to a lot of our visitors who come up from the United States.

This bill is about changing the boundaries, and I think we're all in favour of it. We just like to have some fun along the way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London for his reply.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to thank the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, and the members for Perth–Wellington and Windsor–Tecumseh for their comments.

I find interesting his comments about the federal Conservatives and their advertising. However, that's not third-party advertising. In fact, that's money they've raised. I talked about fixing how the parties raise money, and going forth with their advertising. The parties themselves will be held accountable to the people of Canada, or the province. If in fact they're too negative, that will work against them at the end of the day.

I'm hoping that angry Tom doesn't get too upset at the comments that I made today.

Going forward, and maybe at the end of the day, we can emulate the federal government and change the rules of what goes on in the Legislature and outside, with regard to fundraising, and that is to end third-party advertising, or minimize it, and just see where we can go in having the parties deal with advertising, the parties having debate and making democracy work again in this province and ensuring that we get a government that serves the people and not themselves.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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Hardeman, Emie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
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Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
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McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
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Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
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Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
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Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
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Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
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Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
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Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

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Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 29 September 2015

Mardi 29 septembre 2015



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 29 September 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 29 septembre 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SMART GROWTH FOR OUR COMMUNITIES ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 POUR UNE CROISSANCE INTELLIGENTE DE NOS COLLECTIVITÉS

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 16, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 73, An Act to amend the Development Charges Act, 1997 and the Planning Act / Projet de loi 73, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur les redevances d'aménagement et la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Essex had completed his discussion, and we're now moving into questions and comments.

Mr. Mike Colle: Mr. Speaker, just a comment on the comments made by the previous speaker. Bill 73, the Smart Growth for Our Communities Act, is a very important and very comprehensive bill, because there is incredible opportunity, when development and building occurs, to ensure that when the development is completed, there are services and infrastructure like roads, transit and sewers that are a part of the project so that the project affords existing residents some services.

You can imagine how complex it is with all the building, construction and development taking place across Ontario. So we have to have a comprehensive way of ensuring that when development takes place there is proper transit, parks, schools, sewers and road construction. That is why we need this act. It's a very thoughtful process—a lot of consultation with all the partners—to come up with a more streamlined, comprehensive approach to building communities.

I know that in my own riding I have four towers, the Treviso development, going up at Dufferin and Lawrence. What they did there, which was very smart, is that they had retail space on the main street, on Dufferin and Lawrence, and kept the built form on the main street. Then, out of the development charges, we have a new one-acre park in behind the development so that the local residents can use and enjoy this local park. That's part of the process that this act, Bill 73, deals with.

As I said, it's complex and comprehensive, and that's why this is needed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure to provide a couple of minutes of questions and comments on Bill 73, An Act to amend the Development Charges Act, 1997 and the Planning Act. As most people who have been following the debate know, this is a very comprehensive bill; it's a large bill compared to some of the bills that are before us.

As someone who served at the municipal level, both as an elected official as a local mayor and also later in life as a CAO of a municipality—Ontario's 444 municipalities watch this government very closely when it comes to planning legislation. I think some of my colleagues have, in the past, put on the record comments like "legislation before consultation." I think municipalities really are looking for leadership from all three parties.

I can remember, back when I was a mayor, the most contentious debate in the council chambers in Brockville back in those nine years I served was the year we started development charges. It was a very heated debate; it was a very divisive debate, both in the council and in the community. Growth and managing growth in municipalities is a very delicate balance at the council table.

The one thing that I want to put on the record today—and it seems, over and over again, that this government has a one-size-fits-all model for planning and development in the province. I would just caution them, because, as all of us know, the 444 municipalities are all different. We have some small, we have some big. I know in my riding of Leeds–Grenville, just the fact that we were one of the last, if not the last, counties to have a county-wide official plan. That was an extremely divisive debate, and those members that lived in small rural communities wanted growth. They wanted development, and they felt that this government wasn't listening to them.

So I guess my two minutes of questions and comments are that the government needs to tread lightly and needs to consult municipalities throughout the process.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's always a pleasure to stand and to talk about Bill 73. The title is an appropriate title. The Liberals usually give these fancy, snazzy titles: Smart Growth for Our Communities Act.

The member from Eglinton–Lawrence pointed out an interesting point that I thought was very helpful: When there are projects, when there is development construction happening, there is allocation for recreation and

parkland. That's a smart thing. I know in London we are very conscious of green space. People want healthy communities, and healthy communities mean park space and bike trails. So it's very good to see that in there.

I did also appreciate the section where it says that for appeals, you appeal—part of the plan has to be designated. You can't actually appeal the whole plan, because, like the member had talked about earlier, communities are setting these long-term plans and then someone just comes and opposes the whole plan. That means they have to start all over again or argue the whole plan, so it's nice that they actually have to pick an area of that plan that they have a contention with. Sometimes, in the area of the bill that I read, was justify the appeal—don't just make frivolous complaints against the plan.

I hope that this will help cities plan for the future development that they actually need and make smart growth in communities, because I know London wants to grow in leaps and bounds and make sure we're a viable city, and keep our students there—and make a quality of life for everyone in all cities throughout Ontario.

There are many great cities that I've been to. Last week, we had, in Prince Edward—Hastings, a wonderful event. I was inspired by going to some of those cities, for the apple festival in Cobourg, I believe it was.

We all have our strengths in our cities in Ontario, and I hope this will help build those strengths towards a future growth in many of our communities.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Arthur Potts: It is a delight for me to stand up here and bring comments to the member from Essex, who had an opportunity to speak at great length about this bill. What we saw, of course, is an opportunity for a member who represents smaller municipalities across the province of Ontario and who brought some very reasoned comments about how this bill provides some of the flexibility that I believe is necessary for smaller municipalities. It was great to hear about his riding and some of the opportunities it will create there.

We've also heard from members who represent mid-sized communities and large-sized communities who recognize that, while this is a very comprehensive bill, I believe it's a piece of enabling legislation which provides the kind of flexibility municipalities need in order to advance development. We can still have, and municipalities will continue to have, very heated debates about whether the charges are up or down and what the best strategy is for their community to move ahead and create development, create jobs and create growth, while protecting the kind of green space that others have talked about, or putting in the infrastructure that's necessary, whether it's transit, sewer, waste water treatment etc.

0910

Now, in the riding of Beaches—East York, probably the most contentious issues for us are around large-scale developments. We have opportunities, under section 37 of the Planning Act, where developers can put money toward community amenities, community centres and such.

We have a wonderful development going up on Kingston Road, where a YMCA has partnered with a funeral home and a developer who has bought up a whole tract of land. As a result of this development and the section 37 monies and some of the development charges and the co-operation of the city, we're putting in two levels of YMCA, with swimming pools and tracks and recreation rooms and community meeting spaces, because of the way the developer and the community have been able to leverage some of the tools that are in the City of Toronto Act under the Planning Act in order for them to move forward. I believe this bill will give some of that flexibility to municipalities across Ontario, and we look forward to them taking it up.

The debate has gone on a long time here. Maybe it's time we move this to second reading so we can get on to some more important business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Essex for final comments.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Speaker. Thanks to the members for Eglinton—Lawrence, Leeds—Grenville, London—Fanshawe and Beaches—East York for their comments. It is a comprehensive bill; nevertheless, they missed a whole—it's a comprehensive issue and a complex issue involving municipalities, involving growth, involving sustainability for those municipalities.

What I find ironic is that this government did roughly a year and a half of consultation with municipalities and stakeholders on this bill specifically, yet when it comes to the sale of the largest asset in the history of the province, Ontario Hydro, they have done absolutely zero consultation—none within municipalities. They're hearing from municipalities loud and clear; however, they are not prepared to talk and take this issue to the streets to get some ideas, and to hear the concerns that residents have, that businesses have. Municipalities have serious reservations about the effects that the sale of Ontario Hydro will have on their communities.

Nevertheless, they missed a whole lot in this bill. I'll just touch briefly on a couple of things. It still allows too many appeals to the OMB. They missed that completely. It's a measure of reform that was established in Bill 39, by the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore. Their own member has proposed a lot more reforms that would go a lot further than what the government is proposing. It's a half measure, something we see regularly on the part of the government. They are not fully prepared to take the steps needed to support municipalities in smart growth. This is pseudo-smart. It's a half measure. It's something that potentially can address some of the minor problems, some of the low-hanging fruit. But to actually bring in real reform, I think they would have to take a more comprehensive approach to reforming the OMB.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? The member from—it's a big one—Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker. I want to engage in this debate on Bill 73. It's called an act for smart

growth. I don't believe there is much smart about this bill at all. But I am pleased to see that the minister is here, because I do want the minister—I expect the minister—to be engaged in this debate and listening to the comments.

I'm going to start by saying that, first off, our whole structure of government is based on the underlying principle of a distributed form of government. We have our federal government to take care of national affairs, provincial governments to take care of those jurisdictions that are best suited to be dealt with at the provincial level, and then we have our municipal governments, which are clearly most and best suited to take care of local issues such as planning, such as garbage pickup. There are many, many different, important functions that the municipality has.

But that structure of a distributed form of government is lost when it comes to our planning laws, and I think it's lost completely in the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I want to share some examples with the minister today, and maybe he will have an opportunity to respond in questions and comments.

I'll give the House this example: The town of Perth has an official plan. It was approved by the council of the town of Perth. It was also approved by the Lanark county approval body. Then, that official plan was once again approved by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing—three levels to have this official plan for the town of Perth approved.

Once it was approved, they went to work. There were three developments planned in Perth. If all three developments had gone forward, it would have resulted in a 1% deviation in the population forecast from the official plan. I want that to be clearly understood by the minister. If all three developments had gone ahead, the population of Perth would have been 1% greater than the official plan called for.

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing appealed and prevented those developments from happening based on the 1% problem. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing frustrated, obstructed and prevented the town of Perth from growing. For a number of years, they had them tied up and frustrated in OMB appeals. Eventually, the town of Perth gave up. They gave up dealing with the bureaucracy and the frustration of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and they agreed to only do two developments, which would result in a decrease from the population forecast in the approved official plan—1%.

I think everybody in this House would normally expect that if you got to your target with a deviation of 1%, you should have a pat on the back. You should be applauded for your thoughtful, intelligent and purposeful meeting of those targets. Instead, the ministry frustrated and objected; 99% was not good enough for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Lost opportunities for work, lost opportunity for tax revenues by the municipality, lost opportunities throughout the community and, of course, lost money and time

for people who have invested in that community, and these are people who were born in, raised in and are strong contributors to the community. Their town wanted it, their county wanted it, but the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and his bureaucracy said, "Not good enough—99%, not good enough."

We see the same thing happening throughout rural Ontario with development. I know most Liberal members represent densely populated urban areas, and I understand that perspective; I understand their focus, but there is more to Ontario than just densely populated urban areas, a great deal more. And the people who live there and work there and make this province strong ought not to be penalized and punished by an obstinate, frustrating bureaucracy in Toronto who has their focus on high-rise condos on Front Street. There is more to Ontario than that.

We've seen this with the obstinacy of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing on development in rural Ontario and development on private roads. A great deal of my riding is developed on private roads. To all the hundreds and hundreds of lakes and rural areas in my riding—people get to their homes on their private roads. This ministry has been obstructing and preventing development on private roads for a number of years now. Our communities cannot—Soo, why don't you listen for a little bit instead of just making little—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Hand gestures.

Mr. Randy Hillier:—little hand gestures from the member from Scarborough—Agincourt.

0920

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member is to speak through the Speaker and not engage in contact or verbal discussions with members across. Thank you.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker. Maybe you want to have a chat with the member from Scarborough—Agincourt about hand gestures in the House.

This bill does not address the concerns, the comments, the troubles and the problems of the Planning Act in rural Ontario. In fact, it exacerbates them; it makes them more difficult. For now, there will be no changes to an official plan for at least two years: no zoning bylaws, no amendments, no variations for two years. Once an official plan is done, it is locked in and there's no discussion about it. Things change. We can have plans, but they may deviate a little bit and we need to be flexible enough to deal with those deviations, like that onerous, onerous misprojection of 1% on the three developments in Perth.

The member from Beaches said that this bill brings flexibility to the Planning Act. Well, he either hasn't read the bill or his idea of flexibility would not be found in the Oxford dictionary. Others might say he's talking BS when he says this bill offers flexibility—anything but.

I would ask the minister—he's here today. He's heard my comments about the town of Perth and he's heard my comments about private roads. During the questions and comments, Minister, I would love to hear your rationale for preventing the municipality, the town of Perth, from

proceeding with their developments because their forecast was off by 1%. Would this bill have prevented your ministry from bringing that appeal forward and obstructing the desires and wishes of the elected council of Perth and the councillors of the county planner?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always a great pleasure to stand in my place on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin. I'm happy that I'm here today to listen to the comments from my good friend from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. Last week, he had the opportunity to rise—was maybe tripped as he was rising and he got scooped, but I'm happy I was here nonetheless to hear some of his comments that he made this morning.

He talks about an opportunity for the government to capitalize on in order to bring real change, real reform. He talked about, within his constituency, the frustration that is there on behalf of constituents, on behalf of municipalities, on behalf of many in his area. He talked about an opportunity where there was 99% of his particular communities who were in favour of a certain project, but that just wasn't good enough.

Well, that "not good enough" is particularly the theme of this opportunity under the Smart Growth for Our Communities Act. This is just not good enough. There could have been a lot more. It's a missed opportunity, for real OMB reform is something that is not within this bill. We had Rosario Marchese, who was a real champion of reforming the OMB. I miss him; I wish he was here. I miss his colourful character, but hopefully we will gain from his experience that he brought here—

Mr. John Yakabuski: God bless.

Mr. Michael Mantha: God bless, God bless.

Something that is also missing is an opportunity to bring real inclusionary zoning within the content of this bill. These are real, concrete steps that could have been in this bill and that could have brought real reform, but unfortunately, they are not within this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions or comments?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 73, the Smart Growth for Our Communities Act.

Ontario has changed a lot over a period of years and time. Some of the most evident examples of this are found right here in the greater Toronto area and in my riding of Mississauga-Brampton South.

As we know, it is a huge province. It is a very wide province, the size of France and Spain combined. While most of our residents live near the Great Lakes and that is where most of our urban and industrial development is focused, there are, of course, hundreds of communities scattered across the province. As legislators, and even as ordinary citizens, we travel around our province and see its beauty, its diverse communities, its many ways of life and its natural beauty, especially during this season of change.

We all have a stake in ensuring that Ontario remains beautiful and that it continues to be the best place to live,

work, play and raise our families. That is what this legislation is all about. I understand that the majority of the members support this bill. It is about time that this passes second reading and is referred to committee, where all members from all parties can hear from the stakeholders, experts and their communities, and if they choose so, they can move amendments to strengthen this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? We have the member from Simcoe-Grey

Mr. Jim Wilson: Oh no, no.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Oh. False alarm.

The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It is my pleasure to speak for two minutes to this bill. I hope I get the opportunity to speak longer and I hope that the government doesn't deny me, because I know they're thinking about putting a closure motion on this.

Mr. Steve Clark: Guillotine—

Mr. John Yakabuski: The guillotine.

I'm going to say to the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington: He's bang on. This is the concern that I have with this bill: that you are hampering rural communities even more—the member from Mississauga basically just said that—hampering municipalities in rural Ontario that need to be able to develop those tracts of land. They cannot grow up; nobody is going to build 40-storey condos in Barry's Bay. They have to be able to build lots on those lands that are available. Where you guard are the people who have an intensification problem down here. The problem with this government is that everything is viewed through the lens of a large urban community, and they fail to recognize the reality of rural Ontario time and time and time again.

This is an opportunity to do something right with this bill and not, again, put a wedge between yourselves and the people in rural Ontario who need to be able to continue to exercise some of that freedom when it comes to developing the land that they are entrusted with.

I want to take an opportunity in the few seconds that I have left to shout out to my brother Konrad Yakabuski, who is 50 years old today. He is the last of our family to hit the half-century mark, so I want to congratulate him. A lot of you might know of Konrad. He is a journalist with the Globe and Mail, and a lot of people say, "He can't be your brother, Yak. No way. He's too smart. He writes good columns. He makes a whole lot of sense. There must be something wrong there." But in fact, he is my brother, my youngest brother, and I wish him the very, very best and continued great journalism. Have a fantastic 50th birthday. Welcome to the half-century club.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: This is a great opportunity for us to discuss the way we have grown so far and the way we need to really look at growth moving forward. If we look at the growth in certain urban communities and we look

at the suburbs surrounding those urban communities, we know that there has certainly been a lack of proper planning.

Now, I agree that there are different rules that should apply to different areas. Rural Ontario has different realities, and that is something we should certainly account for in our planning and in our strategies. It's important to account for that. But when it comes to urban centres and the suburbs surrounding those urban centres, the sprawl has not benefitted the residents.

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In cities like Brampton and Mississauga, sprawl has made cities very unlivable in a lot of ways. Intensification, strategically done, is something very important. It's integral to building sustainable communities, communities where you can live, work and play. In many of our communities it's not possible to work in the same community where you live. They have become sleeper communities.

It's also the fact you can't get around in certain communities without a car, and that seriously limits certain people: young people who can't drive and older people who don't want to drive anymore. To make a vibrant society, there need to be real ways to get around, to move, to enjoy your communities without driving; that can't be the only way to move around. So we need to really work on developing societies where people can walk and bike and move around, particularly in urban and suburban communities. I really think we need to look at this.

In addition, and this is a very sensitive topic and we have to do this with a great deal of care, there is only a limited amount of very good agricultural land in Ontario. If we want to really develop an autonomous and sovereign land, you need to have access to food. If we don't ensure that our crop land, the land that can be farmed, is protected, then we are in a position where we can't even grow our own food and we severely impact our own sovereignty. So it's an issue we need to address, as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington for final comments.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I want to thank the members who engaged in the questions and comments that were relating to my debate. The Liberal member provided us with her rehearsed and scripted talking points that had nothing to do with my debate, nothing at all. I had asked the minister, or his parliamentary assistant or anybody, to answer some questions out of my debate; they chose not to. They chose to sit there and play with BlackBerrys or whatever else, but they chose not to engage in debate. They chose not to try to respond, not to try to justify or explain or provide a rationale why the ministry is obstructing and preventing municipalities in rural Ontario from growing.

Why are they obstructing municipalities from growing? Why do they have such a narrow band of latitude? When a municipality comes up with a development propo-

posal that is 101% of its target, why is it that 1% over is unacceptable and gives cause to the ministry to spend untold hundreds of thousands of dollars appealing that development through the Ontario Municipal Board, as well as putting further cost on the municipality to bring their lawyers into the OMB and still frustrate them? I'm disappointed that the minister—or anybody on the Liberal benches—chose not to engage in this debate and not to explain their actions to this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? The member from Oshawa.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: It is always my pleasure to stand in this Legislature and speak on issues that are important to people across our province and people across our communities. Today, I have the chance to bring my voice to the debate on Bill 73, An Act to amend the Development Charges Act, 1997 and the Planning Act. This bill has been the subject of much debate, and we have heard from many of the members of the House. Many of my New Democrat colleagues weighed in and discussed the strengths and shortcomings of this bill.

This bill includes some welcome improvements to the Development Charges Act and the Planning Act, but it falls short. It misses opportunities and the chance to tackle some very real issues faced by our municipalities and our neighbours who live—and often struggle to live—in our communities.

Something that is missing from this bill—but fortunately has not been missing from the discussion, thanks to the New Democrats on this side—is the fact that we need housing and development growth. Ontario should be removing needless barriers and costs that prevent the construction of affordable housing.

Affordable housing is about more than rent or a mortgage; it is about the expenses necessary to keep it running, to keep it warm, to keep the lights on, to keep food on the table. Where is the acknowledgment by this government that Ontarians need predictability when it comes to their homes? People need costs to be stable and fair so they can budget what little they might have to keep up with the cost of living underneath a roof.

Waiting lists in communities across Ontario are growing quickly. Durham region is a region of growth, but also many families are forced to leave their houses and find affordable rental housing, and often it doesn't exist. In Durham, the average wait time for housing is nearly four years for non-senior singles and couples. Seniors wait just over four years. According to the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association's 2014 waiting-list survey, more than 165,000 households were waiting for community-based affordable housing. In Durham, wait times are increasing, and 2013 numbers have us sitting at over 5,200 households on that waiting list.

Existing housing that isn't properly maintained or supported is a reason for so many people to come into my constituency office in Oshawa. The state of repair or lack of investment in our existing housing infrastructure is appalling. This is a government, however, that—I'll give it to them: They really like their shiny new announce-

ments. They want the positive press of announcing a new building or a new program. If only they thought it was flashy and exciting to make announcements about recommitting to funding or making repairs or fixing current programs. Those programs that were once new and have proven that they are worthwhile are often left to languish and scrape together what they can without support or government attention or acknowledgment. If only it was exciting to recut a ribbon, not just cut a new one.

We heard at AMO that too many times this government is not being the partner that they could or should be. We hope that will change. Certainly, in a region that is east of Toronto but not east enough to be Ottawa, sometimes we beg for scraps when it comes to infrastructure, transit or housing investment, and that isn't right.

I would like to share some specifics and statistics when it comes to my region of Durham and Oshawa. The region of Durham published their housing plan for 2014 to 2024 called *At Home in Durham*. It proposed four main goals: to end homelessness in Durham, to ensure that rent is affordable for everyone, to see greater housing choice and to ultimately have strong and vibrant neighbourhoods. This document outlines the challenges and proposes a plan to address the ever-increasing need for more affordable, available housing. I'm going to read the section that discusses the way the government can support these initiatives.

"The federal and provincial governments have vital roles to increase the supply of affordable housing, and availability of and access to support services. They must also support local planning and service delivery related to housing and homelessness.

"Although the province recognizes that Ontario's municipalities are the largest contributors to funding for housing and homelessness services, and that the future of affordable housing depends on sustained funding, there is no long-term funding commitment from the federal or provincial government to support local planning and service delivery.

"The region, in collaboration with its partners, will continue to advocate for the funding commitments and legislative and policy changes necessary to support the implementation of *At Home in Durham*."

As in communities across the province, there are challenges faced by many individuals and families in many neighbourhoods. Oshawa is a city with a population of about 157,000, and it is the largest city in Durham region. Just east of Toronto we have been seeing steady population growth over the past 20 years, but in about the past five years our growth has increased substantially. We have a lot of competition for the little affordable housing that does exist. We have three universities in the area and a huge need for student housing. We have families and single individuals vying for anything that might be available, and there isn't much. Our vacancy rate for one and two bedrooms is below what is considered balanced for a community, and if we consider public housing units, those vacancy levels would be far, far lower. We have many people earning minimum wage, currently \$11, or who are on basic pensions.

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I would like to read from a submission from Cornerstone to the CMHC related to the need for affordable housing in our area: "Individuals who are paid minimum wage and working full-time (35 hours per week) earn less than \$1,540 a month before taxes. Households spending more than 30% of their income are generally considered to have a housing affordability problem. In Oshawa, these individuals have to spend nearly 44% of their gross income on an average rent bachelor apartment and 57% of their gross income on an average rental one-bedroom apartment. Finding available and affordable apartments can be very challenging. Individuals whose only source of income is based on CPP/OAS (basic pension for a single senior) have to spend 61% of their income on renting an average rental one-bedroom apartment in Oshawa. The average cost of rental housing in Oshawa is also not affordable for those dependent on financial assistance, particularly single persons."

Speaker, I'd like to tell you a bit about Cornerstone Community Association Durham. Cornerstone provides men's shelter and support. It is an organization that provides services to individuals who are homeless and require support to be in the community. They provide 40 beds of emergency shelter, 15 beds for individuals returning from correctional facilities, 10 units of transitional housing and 56 units of permanent housing.

Another awesome example of a partner in our community providing support is the YWCA. They also offer second-stage housing. I'd like to read to you a bit about that:

"The YWCA Durham provides the region's only second-stage housing program for women at risk." The women "will find safe, supportive and affordable housing and meals. The program also provides a peer network, professional counselling, advocacy and job and life skills development.

"Over a maximum 24-months stay, these women will gain the skills, connections and confidence to achieve long-term success and independence in Durham region."

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to tour and spend an afternoon at the YWCA. This is an organization that does so much with the little that they have, but with the never-ending need for affordable and safe housing for women, their challenges are increasing. With the cost of hydro and gas steadily increasing, they're worried they won't be able to provide the level of support that is needed.

Mr. Speaker, one of the most wonderful parts of this job is the opportunity to connect with organizations that look after the needs in our community.

We have an outreach centre called the Refuge, and they provide safe refuge for youth in our community up to age 24. They recognize that youth are struggling.

There are unbelievable challenges in our community, and we're doing our best to meet them, but we need support from the government.

We're debating a bill called the Smart Growth for Our Communities Act. There is nothing in it about the need

for affordable housing. I could talk all day about the need in my community, and I wouldn't imagine that there's a single member here who couldn't find real housing needs within their own communities. Why, then, are we not seeing it in this bill? If this government was actually interested in smart growth for our communities, then they would be interested in supporting that growth. Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you, that wouldn't just be smart; it would be the right thing to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It gives me great pleasure to rise today in support of Bill 73.

There are many, many good amendments in Bill 73, and one that really caught my eye is the review of ineligible services to determine if they would be made eligible for development charges. That's something that we hear from municipalities—and not only from municipalities, but from different groups.

I want to speak about this today because after a recent meeting that I had with the chair of Halton region—they need a courthouse. You've heard this, Mr. Speaker, in the House. Every MPP representing this area on both sides of the House—they need a new courthouse. The Milton courthouse doesn't need any repairs; we need a new courthouse there. The chair, who used to be on your side at one point, sitting in the chair in this Legislature, would like to be able to add a development charge for the construction of this new courthouse.

I don't know if this would come on time to help Milton and the Halton region, but that is something we need to have a conversation about, and to review what should be in the development charge and what should be out. There is opinion on both sides, so let's have this conversation.

There are already 50 members who have spoken on this—more than 50—and the bill has been discussed for over nine hours. I think after most of us have spoken, it needs to go to committee where the real change will occur.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to commend the member from Oshawa for a great presentation on what is in the bill, but, primarily, the one mentioning that there is absolutely nothing in here about affordable housing—not so much that one would expect this bill to come out and say how many units of affordable housing the government is going to provide over the next five or 10 years, but to actually put something in the bill that would encourage the local planning to include that, to help municipalities to be able to afford to build housing, because obviously we know that most of the public housing is, in fact, maintained and provided by municipalities; to have something in there that they could accommodate building that housing, such as including that as part of the charges that new developments would come with. It's a municipal service that could be provided.

The minister, when he introduced it, might have wanted to look at my private member's bill that deals with the

Housing Services Corp., which presently is spending millions of dollars to be the bulk purchasing agent for all our public housing, when in fact the city of Toronto says that if they didn't have to, if they weren't mandated to do that, they could buy their fuel and their insurance and save \$6 million a year, which they could put into front-line housing for the people who need it, the 160,000 or 170,000 people who are waiting in line for that. Some of them could be housed with that \$6 million.

The city of Hamilton, where the minister is from, could save over \$1 million a year if the minister would just allow them to opt out of purchasing it from the Housing Services Corp. and allow them to buy it where they buy their gas and insurance for all their other purposes. I think there's an opportunity that he could use to further the cause of public housing and meet the concerns of the member from Oshawa.

I also—since I've run out of time, I guess I don't want to do anymore. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: This is why I love this place so much, really. It proves that debate is so important. I'm hearing a lot of great ideas—not too partisan; it's really good. The member who just spoke brought up another great idea that could provide some benefit and support to municipalities. But my colleague the member from Oshawa really zeroed in on one of the most glaring spots of this bill that has been missed: the need for inclusionary zoning.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs—we're familiar with it. It's a psychological theory about the most important needs that human beings require—food, water and shelter—to maintain human dignity, to be able to prosper as a human being. In this chamber, here, what can we do to support those who are struggling to find those basic needs and to support themselves. Here's an example of where we could implement that type of support: to bring in inclusionary zoning to make sure that affordable housing units are there. There's the volume of it.

I'm going to chat with you after, Minister, because I know you've got some great ideas, too. It sounds like you want debate to continue on this. But, my goodness, what a simple effect, a simple action we could take here in this House, to large effect—

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Wait for it.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Wait for it? We've been waiting for 12 years, Minister. Various bills have come through here. We can't wait any longer. People can't—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to remind the member—but I will make it inclusive of all members—that during debates and during questions and comments, please address your comments through the Speaker and not to individuals within the Legislature. I appreciate your co-operation and I will thank you in advance.

Back to the member from Essex.

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Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you, Speaker. You know, I forgot about—

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Point of order—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Minister?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: The member lost about 30 seconds, and he was making so much sense, I'd like to make sure we give that back to him.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much, Minister, but you just took another 20 seconds. So, unfortunately, I would like to say, "Back to the member"; however, we have now expired the time allotted for questions and comments.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Apologize.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please.

I'll give you an opportunity to speak to the minister afterwards.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): All right; there you go.

We're back to further questions and comments. I recognize the member from York South–Weston.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me. I'm glad to add my comments to Bill 73. Listening to the debate this morning, it seems that most of the members are in agreement with this bill. They are adding more ideas to it, but it seems that we do have an overall consent to the bill.

I just want to say that what I really like about the bill is the fact that it proposes to enhance citizen engagement. This would require municipalities, for example, and approval authorities to explain how public input affected their planning decisions, require municipal official plans to include locally designed public consultation policies, and not only increase the use of planning advisory committees and ensure citizen memberships are on these committees—that would be tremendously important. For example, it would make a difference in the community I have the privilege to represent, the area of York South–Weston here in the city of Toronto.

We often feel that the community is not consulted enough. I think this would really strengthen that piece. I think we all look forward as members to hear from the municipalities, to hear from the stakeholders how this would affect them. We have the opportunity to see how we can improve the bill in many ways from their perspective. I think that there are some basic, stable elements in the bill that are worth supporting.

I'm looking forward to this bill moving forward and going towards its next step so that we can have public hearings. That's what we do before we pass legislation: hear from the people. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Oshawa for final comments.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the comments from my colleagues around the Legislature. Thank you to the member from Oxford. To your point of actually putting something in the bill that would support municipalities and encourage affordable housing, that's a bigger conversation, and

certainly, as we're being rushed through this one, we will have to look forward to that another time.

Also, thank you to the member from Essex. I appreciated your comments about maintaining human dignity. In our communities, with so many people struggling, it's not just the people that we think of traditionally either in the margins or struggling in poverty; it's also people who live in our established communities or in different pockets of the community whose life sometimes happens to—they're struggling to pay their bills, a child gets sick, a partner loses an income, and they're forced to change their situation, or life changes it for them. We have people throughout our communities who are in need of affordable and available safe and secure housing.

This is something we need to prioritize, inclusionary zoning, as the member started to talk about before his time evaporated. That's a conversation and something that the government has said that they support and have in the past. So let's put that into the next bill we get to talk about.

I had mentioned the Refuge Youth Outreach Centre as being an organization in my community. They serve street-involved and homeless youth up to the age of 24. This is a resilient group of youth who come from all sorts of walks of life and are struggling. I had a town hall meeting with many of the youth recently and they shared with me the difficulty of finding a place to live downtown. If it's safe and affordable, it probably has already been taken by a family or a student.

Many people are living in precarious arrangements, and they're the invisible homeless. They're sleeping on floors and sleeping on couches, and if they do find affordable rentals, sometimes it's in a building with health and safety concerns, from mold and bedbugs to violence and drug use.

You know what? These cannot be the only options for people. So let's talk about smart growth; let's talk about supporting that growth.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: Again, this is a very exciting bill. If you go through it, Mr. Speaker, as I'm sure you have, there are some incredibly interesting parts to it that really affect all aspects of living in Ontario, developing and planning our communities, our towns and cities all over this province.

This area is so complex, and, again, this is a bill that deals with so many areas. In essence, what it does is that it lays out a more comprehensive process in terms of the processes for planning and deciding what density goes in the neighbourhood, what amenities, what the development charges are, putting some kind of order into this complex maze of development charges.

In my own area, I've got one of the most highly developed parts of North America happening right now at Yonge and Eglinton. If you look at Yonge and Eglinton right now, I think there are about 30 new condominium towers under construction—30. It's almost the size of the city of Orillia that's going into the bottom end of my

riding. So you need a proper comprehensive process and approval in conjunction with the province and the city of Toronto and its overwhelmed planning department.

As we are building those towers there, there's also a subway being built along Eglinton that intersects with the Yonge line. There's going to be a massive new housing development there at the old bus loop at Yonge and Eglinton. You can imagine: All of a sudden, we're going to have a new city of Orillia right in the middle of Yonge and Eglinton. Luckily, at least there is a subway and there's a new east-west subway, the Eglinton line that's being built. But beyond the subways, you have to have proper planning for sewers, for roads, for parks, for schools, so everyone is involved.

That's why this legislation is going to require municipalities to prepare park plans in consultation with school boards and the public in order to facilitate planning for all of this green space. Right now, it's very ad hoc, so this is a critical part of this bill.

I know that in my own riding we had one great success in terms of planning and preserving our heritage in the Yonge-Eglinton area. There is the famous spot where William Lyon Mackenzie held his ground in the Rebellion of 1837. It's the famous spot, Montgomery's Tavern, whereby a democratic government was established in Ontario at that time, in the Rebellion of 1837, and we have the historical spot where we have a postal station that was built: historic Postal Station K.

At that spot on Yonge and Eglinton—Canada Post, as you know, has had a sell-off of all its postal stations across this country, sadly. Here, they were going to basically give away this historic site to unbridled development. Luckily, the community mobilized. We got over 10,000 people to sign a petition. We marched on city hall. We had rallies. In fact, we brought the petitions up to Ottawa. We were able to preserve Postal Station K for future generations. It's a beautiful, iconic building, one of the few buildings in all the world that's got the mark of Edward VIII on it. That's quite rare. It's an art deco building by a great architect, Brown. So we were able to protect that.

What we did was, we had an agreement with the developer where the developer was going to preserve this historic building and he was going to build his building behind the historic postal station site and cantilever some of the housing up above. We now have this building preserved. We have a new public square there called Montgomery Square. So we've kept some green space on Yonge and Eglinton, and we've got this historic building, along with all these new buildings. But that took a lot of work. It took two or three years of the public getting mobilized and incredible cooperation.

1000

This is the type of thing that this act tries to put in a systematic process. I'm glad that in the bill, there's also a reference to section 37. I don't know if the members here are familiar with section 37, but section 37 means that when a development occurs, the city or town council can go to the developer and agree to have amenities put in

place as part of the approval process. The problem with section 37, as you know, in Toronto, and especially in the GTA, is there are hundreds of these section 37 agreements that take place, but there is no full transparency in it. In other words, what was approved? What was received? What were the amenities? What was the cost? Is there any plan? It's been very ad hoc. In this act, there is an attempt to try and formalize the section 37 intensification that's taking place. It's a very important part of this bill.

I know the member from Oshawa made a good point that this bill will deal with—and that is in terms of the approval process. When developers build in an area, perhaps there should be some section 37 or other development charges for soft services; in other words, whether it's supportive housing, or housing for the infirm or whatever. It's not only for transit and sewers. So in this legislation, there's a potential to have some of these development charges for soft services, social services, which are just as important as sewers and transit and roads. That's why I just ask everybody to look at this bill. It is a very meaningful bill.

As you know, we've had about 10 hours of debate on this thing. What we have to do now is bring in all the local municipalities, all the local experts, all the public stakeholders who want to speak to this bill. They can't do it in this House. They can do it in committee. That's where the real changes will be made as we get this input from these people who are knowledgeable and affected. That's why the committee stage is critically important.

I just ask the members here that—we need to get this comprehensive expert input from our people out in the community. I think we've heard good information here from over 60 speakers, and I think we need to hear from the people out there. It's critically important to hear from ordinary citizens. The people need to be heard on this bill because it affects all of our communities.

I think we've spent good time. As a result, Speaker, I move that this question be now put.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Eglinton—Lawrence has moved that the question now be put. Having had the opportunity to listen to debate now for over 10 hours, it is my opinion that the—recognizing that the question has now been put, is it the pleasure of the House that the closure motion be made? I heard a no.

All those in favour of closure, please say “aye.”

Keeping in context with them, all those opposed, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Following question period this morning, there will be a vote—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): There will be a deferred vote—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, but you haven't decided if there's enough debate. You haven't said that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Yes, I did.

Mr. John Yakabuski: He mumbled.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): To the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, I'll ask you to come to order. Thank you.

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Orders of the day.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: No further business, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Since there is no further business, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1005 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John Yakabuski: As the PC energy critic, I'm happy to see the Canadian Nuclear Association here at Queen's Park today. Dr. John Barrett, president and CEO of the CNA, is here along with member companies to discuss the impact the nuclear industry has on Ontario. In 2014, nuclear energy provided 62% of grid power. We welcome the opportunity to meet with the representatives.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm delighted to introduce members of the Regional Tibetan Youth Congress: Kunga Tsering, Thondup Tsering, Tenzin Rigdol, Tenzin Dolker and Ogyen Tsering. They're here on a hunger strike to support the hunger strikers in India protesting the oppression of the Tibetan people by the People's Republic of China.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Not wanting to interrupt the introduction, but I will use this opportunity as a reminder that we are not to read from any materials other than a piece of paper, and even then it's not supposed to happen. I just offer that as a kind reminder to all.

Further introductions?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to introduce Linda Prytula, who is here with us today watching question period. She is a member of the board of the Ontario Pharmacists Association and, more importantly, she lives and works in my riding of Oakville.

Mr. Norm Miller: I would like to welcome Joan Pajunen, who is director-at-large in the Ontario Pharmacists Association. I met with her and other members of the pharmacy association this morning, and she's from Kilworthy in Muskoka. I'd like to welcome her.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Also, I have the pleasure to introduce Brandon Tenebaum, member of the Ontario Pharmacists Association and, most importantly, a member of my riding of Parkdale–High Park.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to welcome two good friends of mine who are visiting Queen's Park. Please welcome Hafeez Rupani and Nadia Effendi to Queen's Park.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome a director with the Ontario Pharmacists Association and a councillor from one of the most beautiful municipalities in Ontario,

Prince Edward county, Bill Roberts, to the Legislature this morning.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to welcome two individuals from the Ontario Pharmacists Association to Queen's Park today: my friend Sean Simpson, the chair of the OPA board, who lives and works in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and Connie Beck from Niagara Falls.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd also like to welcome a board member of the Ontario Pharmacists Association, Christine Ling, who is visiting Queen's Park from Don Valley West today.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to welcome all the pharmacists that are here today to talk to us about care and service to the patients of Ontario. Especially, I want to welcome Brandon Tenebaum. I didn't realize he was here. He was a classmate of mine, 1995. Good to see you.

Mr. Michael Mantha: On behalf of the NDP caucus, I'm happy to welcome the Canadian Nuclear Association to Queen's Park, led by Dr. John Barrett. The CNA and the member companies are here to discuss the importance of nuclear energy, the importance of the 60,000 direct and indirect jobs they bring. I look forward to meeting up with them. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'd like to introduce Fred Bristow, a board member of the Ontario Pharmacists Association who works, lives and plays in Toronto Centre. Welcome, Fred.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'd like to welcome and introduce Jen Baker to the House today. Jen Baker is a member of the Ontario Pharmacists Association board and comes from the riding of Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Adlington.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to introduce someone who is not a pharmacist. Frank Caron is here; he's sitting in the members' gallery. Welcome, Frank. He is the husband of Allison Buchan-Terrell, a member of my staff. Welcome.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like to introduce Mike Cavanagh from the great riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock and a member of the board of directors of the Ontario Pharmacists Association. Thanks, Mike, for being here.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I had the great pleasure of meeting members from the Canadian Nuclear Association this morning: John Stewart, Matt Mairinger and Mike Belmore. Certainly, it makes a significant impact on our economy. I welcome them and their colleagues in the House this morning.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I, too, would like to welcome some of the members from the Ontario Pharmacists Association: Deb Saltmarche, Bill Roberts, Christine Ling and Dennis Darby. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm also pleased to welcome the Ontario Pharmacists Association to Queen's Park today, including: Dennis Darby, the CEO; Sean Simpson, board chair; and Deb Saltmarche, past chair, who's from my riding of St. Paul's. They're here with many of their colleagues, as we've heard.

The OPA are hosting a reception in the legislative dining room this evening from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. All members of the Legislature and their staff are, of course, invited.

Mr. Han Dong: I would like to welcome Stacey D'Angelo, a pharmacist from Trinity-Spadina and a board member of OPA; and also a student pharmacist, Kavita Puri. I look forward to meeting them this afternoon.

Hon. David Zimmer: It is my pleasure to introduce Bharati Bapat, the aunt of our page captain, Sameer Bapat.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? Maybe introductions of people who aren't here yet but will be arriving? I'm seeing none.

We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery a parliamentary delegation from the National Assembly of the Republic of Fiji. They are led by the Minister of Agriculture, the Honourable Inia Batikota Seruiratu. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. On March 24, the Premier said, "When I say that I am going to co-operate and have been co-operating with the authorities, I'm talking about the authorities whose responsibility is to conduct the investigation."

When the Premier says that she's going to co-operate with authorities, does that include the criminal court assigned to the corruption charges against her key fundraiser? Will the Premier agree to testify if subpoenaed to the trial of Gerry Lougheed Jr.?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Obviously this is an issue that I have taken very seriously. Because I take it seriously, Mr. Speaker, I have co-operated with all of the authorities; I have co-operated in the investigations. I've been very open with the Legislature, and in fact, I've answered 96—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've heard enough, and it will stop.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've answered 96 questions on this issue in the Legislature. I've made dozens of statements in the media and answered questions in the media. I have co-operated with the authorities. I will continue to co-operate with the authorities, as we all have.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again for the Premier: The Premier has told the Legislature 40 times that she will co-operate with authorities during the Sudbury investigation. In fact, on February 26, the Premier said that she would "fully co-operate and work with the authorities...."

The official opposition respects the fact that the Premier met with OPP investigators, but her duty is to clear the air, and that hasn't been done. The people of Ontario

deserve to know who ordered Gerry Lougheed to make the phone call and offer the alleged bribe.

This is very clear: Is the Premier prepared to appear before the court and answer those questions?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I have said, I have answered all of the questions that have been asked of me. I have answered 96 questions in the House. If past behaviour is indicative of future behaviour—and I have co-operated with the authorities, I've worked with the authorities, I have co-operated with the investigation. I will continue to do that.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, this is as clear as mud. Again to the Premier: We know the Premier has the parliamentary privilege to be exempted as a witness. However, the privilege is not meant to impede the course of justice. The people of Ontario deserve to know what really happened with the Sudbury by-election scandal, so I'm sure the people of Ontario want the Premier to waive that privilege and appear if called to the trial.

Mr. Speaker, yes or no: Will the Premier testify if subpoenaed to the corruption trial of her key fundraiser?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am standing. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have not attempted to avoid answering questions that have been posed to me here, that have been posed to me by the police or that have been posed to me by the authorities. I have worked with the investigation. I have co-operated fully, and I will continue to co-operate fully.

In fact, unprompted, I have made statements in public about the situation in Sudbury. I will continue to co-operate. I will continue to respond to requests by the authorities, as I have done. That behaviour is not going to change.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

FINANCEMENT DES SOINS DE SANTÉ

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, when questioned about health cuts, this Liberal government refused to take responsibility. This year, the Canada health transfer increased by \$652 million. The Liberals shifted \$54 million away from this transfer, maybe to a different ministry or maybe to cover up another one of their scandals. No one knows which one it is, Mr. Speaker, because the Liberal government refuses to even acknowledge the \$54-million cut to health care.

The decision to cut \$54 million was the wrong decision. Will the Premier admit she cut \$54 million from health care, from the front lines, at exactly the wrong time?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Health is going to want to comment on this, but let me just go over what has been going on in health in terms of the big picture in Ontario.

Since 2003, hospital funding in Ontario has risen from \$11.3 billion to \$17.3 billion this year. That's a 53% increase. This year, the health care budget is \$50.8 billion. We committed to a 5% increase in home and community care investments, which will grow over \$750 million over the next three years. Funding for community support services increased to almost \$514 million this year. That's an increase of \$41.9 million over last year.

The fact is that there are 24,000 more nurses in Ontario than there were in 2003. The number of physicians has increased by 5,600—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again for the Premier: These cuts are hurting people across the province, and at the CCACs in my own riding. Last year, a 74-year-old Simcoe county woman, who is nearly blind and had a below-the-knee amputation, had twice daily visits by a PSW to help her bathe and deal with developing sores. When her husband died last summer, the CCAC cut her evening support. Shortly after that, she was notified that she would lose her morning visit as well. At that point, she began developing sores. She couldn't reach the sores to treat them herself. Her services were restored, but only after she hired a private patient advocate.

Where is the Premier's compassion? Does she believe patients should have to pay out of pocket to get their service restored, to hire a private contractor to fight for their services?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Notwithstanding the fact that that party, the party opposite, voted against our increase of \$250 million annually to home and community care for each of the next three years, the Leader of the Opposition has a chance to redeem himself and redeem his party by supporting—and I think he will, just given the nature of his question—our 10-point plan that we announced earlier this year, this spring, in fact, of important changes to make to our home and community care sector. Alongside that increase in funding, it's a 10-point plan that implements in full the results of an expert panel led by the esteemed Gail Donner to help us make sure that the quality of services that we provide is the best that it can possibly be.

So I ask the member opposite, the leader of the official opposition: Will he support our 10-point action plan to improve home and community care across this province?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

M. Patrick Brown: Ma question est encore pour la première ministre. Le vendredi passé, nous avons célébré la journée francophone. Mais dans ma circonscription de Simcoe-Nord, le gouvernement ferme l'hôpital de Penetanguishene. Ce gouvernement tourne le dos contre les municipalités comme Penetanguishene. Cinquante positions dans la résidence en médecine sont coupées quand 800 000 Ontariens ont besoin d'un médecin. En même temps, ce gouvernement coupe 54 millions de dollars dans le budget de la santé. C'est assez.

Monsieur le Président, quand est-ce que notre première ministre va protéger l'hôpital francophone si important à Penetanguishene?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: To the minister of francophone affairs.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: C'est une excellente question qui est posée. En fait, je suis très au courant de ce qui se passe à l'Hôpital général de la baie Georgienne et son site à Penetanguishene. Le ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée a indiqué que le site de Penetang ne pourra pas fermer ses portes tant que les services aux francophones ne seront pas transférés à l'Hôpital général de la baie Georgienne.

Alors, le réseau d'intégration des services de santé de Simcoe-Nord, dans leur planification des services de santé en français, collabore très bien avec l'Hôpital général de la baie Georgienne. Aujourd'hui, je voudrais rendre hommage au ministre de la Santé, qui a intervenu rapidement pour s'assurer que les services seront maintenus dans le nouvel hôpital de la baie Georgienne. Alors, merci beaucoup, ministre de la Santé.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Ontarians are growing increasingly cynical about this Liberal government and politics. It's no wonder, considering the Sudbury bribery scandal and people's disbelief that this Premier could actually sell off Hydro One without any public consultation whatsoever.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy House leader, second time.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Despite the condescending lectures of the government House leader yesterday, there is nothing that says that the Premier couldn't stand in this place and accept some responsibility for her role and the role of her office in the Sudbury bribery scandal. Will this Premier finally take some responsibility and tell Ontarians who gave the order for Mr. Loughheed to offer a bribe to Mr. Olivier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I said to the leader of the third party yesterday, I have spoken on this issue. I have answered questions in the Legislature. Between February 17 and April 2, and including questions in the House this month, I've answered 96 questions. All of that is in Hansard. It's quite clear what my position has been.

I've made statements in the media, unprompted. So I'm not going to pre-empt the process that is now before the courts, and I think the leader of the third party knows full well that it would be inappropriate of me to do so.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Premier is right about one thing: This place isn't a court, where she would have to answer to a judge. This is the Ontario Legislature, and in this place she's supposed to answer to the people of Ontario. It's no wonder that people are becoming more and more cynical about politics if it takes being sworn in by a judge to actually get some honesty around here.

Will this Premier finally take some responsibility and tell Ontarians whether she, Ms. Sorbara or someone else in her office instructed Mr. Lougheed to offer a bribe?

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Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have been completely honest with the people of Ontario. I have answered questions repeatedly in the House. I have made statements in the media. I have responded to questions in the media. I have co-operated with the authorities. I will continue to do that. But this is not a court of law, and I am not going to pre-empt that process. There is an issue that is before the courts, and we have to let that process unfold.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier has had opportunities to show leadership. She has had opportunities to accept responsibility for her actions and the actions of people around her. But at every opportunity, she has refused and instead protected Liberal insiders, dragging the reputation of the Office of the Premier of Ontario through the mud, increasing that sense of cynicism that so many Ontarians are feeling about their government.

If the Premier and her office have nothing to hide in the Sudbury bribery scandal, then why won't she put cynical politics aside and tell Ontarians who it was that directed Mr. Lougheed to offer Mr. Olivier a bribe in Sudbury?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The questions that the leader of the third party is putting forward are questions that will no doubt be asked in the court. I'm not going to pre-empt that process or presume to know what those questions will be. I have co-operated with the authorities. I will continue to do that.

I think that it is extremely important that everyone understand that we are engaged as a government in making very difficult decisions in implementing a plan that is going to build this province up, that is already building the province up. The leader of the third party can laugh, because she actually doesn't support investments in transit and transportation infrastructure. She actually doesn't support making a business environment that allows businesses to thrive. She has opposed all of the actions that we have taken and will continue to take to make sure that this province is competitive and that our economy can grow.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The people of Ontario are watching.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke: second time.
New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Over the summer, I was in every corner of this province. I spoke to New Democrats, I spoke to Liberals, I spoke to Conservatives and I spoke to people who have no partisan interest whatsoever. They all told me the exact same thing: They are frustrated, they are worried and they are angry that this Premier is selling off Hydro One without ever consulting them. They are growing cynical about a government that simply will not listen. Will this Premier address the concerns that people are raising and hold public hearings on the sell-off of Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I understand that this leader of the third party perceives that it is in her political interest to make sure that she stirs up any concerns that people might have. I understand that that is in her best interests as she perceives it. Some might say that is cynical. Some might say it is cynical that when people raise concerns—because I know; I travelled the province. I was in every corner of the province, and I know—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, you never heard it, eh?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: No, I know that there are concerns, but it is my responsibility—and I would suggest it's all of our responsibility—to tell the whole story, to make sure that people understand that the decision our government has taken is about investing in this province for a brighter future, a more prosperous future, a more competitive future. That's what the decision is, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What about the 82% of people who do not want to see Hydro One sold off? I think these Liberals should listen to what Ontarians have to say.

Yesterday, we heard that 165 municipalities so far oppose the Liberal sell-off of Hydro One. One of their biggest complaints is the utter lack of any consultation whatsoever by this arrogant Premier. Sarnia Mayor Mike Bradley said that you would have to actually be Sherlock Holmes to figure out that the Liberal pre-election budget was talking about selling off Ontario's hydro utility.

The Premier needs to listen. If she won't listen to me, then she should be listening to the municipal leaders and the people of this province, who are telling her that they haven't had a say and that they want a say. Will this Premier allow public hearings, either through the OEB or through any other mechanism, on the sell-off of Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that the leader of the third party raised the commentary that was made by the mayor of Sarnia yesterday, because I had the opportunity to attend the chamber of commerce in Sarnia. I had an—

Mr. Paul Miller: The people have spoken: 85%.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek: second time.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It was a great opportunity. I think it was one of the first times in recent memory that a Premier had actually been to speak with the businesses in Sarnia. It was a great meeting. I had an opportunity to have a tour.

But, Mr. Speaker, I will tell you that the number one issue that the mayor of Sarnia raised with me was the building of a road. The mayor of Sarnia wants money for infrastructure. The mayor of Sarnia knows that his and his community's productivity and competitiveness rest on having investments in infrastructure.

The leader of the third party needs to flesh out her story when she's talking about—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, it's no wonder that the people of Ontario are growing increasingly cynical about this government, considering the display we just saw. The cancellation of the gas plants, eHealth, Ornge, deleted public records, the Sudbury bribery scandal and now the sell-off of Hydro One: It's easy to understand how Ontarians have become so cynical, but it is bad for democracy.

The Premier has said that she wants to do things differently. Well, I would submit that it certainly is not too late. Will this Premier start actually doing things differently, start trying to regain the public's confidence and hold public hearings before she sells off the first tranche of shares of Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said many times, a couple of things: This was a very difficult decision, but the fact is that we must make those investments, including in infrastructure in Sarnia and in every part of the province—Hamilton, Kitchener-Waterloo, northwestern Ontario—all communities that are looking for investment in infrastructure, Mr. Speaker.

We made it clear in our budget, in our platform, that we were looking at assets and that we were looking at leveraging those assets so that we could invest in the new assets that we need for the 21st century. It was clear to people—it was even clear to the leader of the third party—that we were actually looking at those assets, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the leader of the third party, on July 9, 2014, said, "The budget says in black and white that the government is looking at the sale of assets, 'including ... crown corporations, such as Ontario Power Generation,

Hydro One and the Liquor Control Board of Ontario.'" She understood it, Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

PHARMACISTS

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Speaker, today the halls of Queen's Park are filled with the most accessible health care providers in Ontario, our pharmacists. Unfortunately, these health care professionals have been an easy target for cuts from this government for the past 12 years, and October 1 is no exception. With your cut to nursing positions throughout the province and your \$235-million cut to doctors, pharmacists will see a \$150-million cut to their profession.

However, due to the accessibility of pharmacists, the government should be utilizing the abilities of the pharmacists to derive immediate cost savings in the health care system, such as implementing expanded injection authority, expanding smoking cessation programs and enabling pharmacists to treat minor common ailments. Minister, why do you ignore the expanded scope of practice for pharmacists?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know my critic is new at the job, but I would have hoped, given his background, that he would know that we have dramatically expanded the scope of practice for our pharmacists across this province, as we should. Very shortly, later in the next month, in October, our pharmacists are going to join us in vaccinating. I anticipate, upwards of one million Ontarians against the flu by administering the flu vaccine in our pharmacies. It's a wonderful example of increasing scope of practice, but also utilizing our pharmacists to the full extent.

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These are individuals who have such great capacities and are such an integral part of our health care system. We're constantly looking for ways that we can take advantage of their expertise, take advantage of their presence in our communities and take advantage of the fact that they have the trust of our communities and the people who live there to make sure we provide that quality health service.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the Minister of Health: I've been a pharmacist for 20 years. I've been proud of my profession; however, to just exemplify that pharmacists can only do flu shots is absolutely ridiculous. If you listened to my first question, it's an expansion of vaccinations across the board. However, hopefully you can listen to my supplemental and come up with a better response for the pharmacists who are here today.

Your government seems to have money to pay out bonuses for the Pan Am Games and, according to the Auditor General, money to create large bureaucracies in the health care system. However, you are continuing to cut front-line health services to the detriment of Ontarians.

Pharmacists have been proven to create immediate savings in the health care system while increasing services. Other provinces have implemented expanded injection authority for pharmacists, expanded smoking cessation programs, and other provinces have enabled pharmacists to treat minor common ailments—all of which would create immediate savings in the health care system.

Minister, why are you so focused on paying the salaries and bonuses of the health care bureaucracy while you wage a war with—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: To the member opposite, I didn't raise the issue of expanded access to further injectable vaccines because, quite frankly, I wanted to leave the best for last.

I announced a number of months ago—in fact, it was in our budget—that we are expanding the scope of our pharmacists even further to enable them to provide travel vaccinations, potentially other vaccinations as well. You voted against that budget, but it was there in black and white. I made the announcement a number of months ago as well—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me: Minister of Natural Resources; member from Haliburton. Thank you.

Finish, please.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I would just invite the member opposite to come to the reception tonight and hear from pharmacists and from the OPA how much they are celebrating the fact that we're increasing the scope.

We've created a table to look at further injectables, and we are moving forward in a way that I think, if you actually talk to pharmacists, they'll agree with.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier: Yesterday, the Minister of Energy tried once again to claim he has a public mandate to sell Hydro One. To reporters, he said that before the election, "We talked about repurposing our assets without being specific." He said, "There is no government that is ever elected that abides by every single detail of an election platform.... The principle was in the election platform. The specifics were in the budget."

Some 166 municipalities now, including Peterborough, and more than 80% of Ontarians believe that the sale of Hydro One is more than just a detail. Since your minister now agrees that the sale of Hydro One was not specifically mentioned in her election platform, will the Premier finally admit she has no public mandate?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, we know that the NDP, the third party, has been criss-crossing the prov-

ince, telling everybody that rates will skyrocket because Hydro One is going to broaden its ownership. The reality: That is not the case. Last week—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton is warned, and I'm going to remind everyone to use titles or riding names. It does not elevate the debate; it lowers it.

Finish, please.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Speaker, they've been telling everybody the sky is falling and hydro rates are going to skyrocket. The reality is that last week the Supreme Court of Canada confirmed that the Ontario Energy Board has the authority to control rates, to reverse rates, not to give requested increases. In fact, it was Ontario Power Generation before the Supreme Court of Canada, and the Supreme Court of Canada said the Ontario Energy Board rolled back their increases and would not give it to them because of unacceptable costs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I think it's very telling that the minister wouldn't answer the question.

I'm going back to the Premier. Before the election, the Premier said she preferred to keep Hydro One in public hands. The Minister of Finance told the Economic Club of Canada, "Public ownership is the key." Now the Premier says the public should never have trusted her. She says the public should have understood that weasel words like "repurposing assets" or—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not acceptable. Withdraw, please.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Withdrawn—that code words like "repurposing assets" or "leveraging" were code for selling Hydro One; and because the public didn't understand the code, she now claims to have a mandate to sell Ontario's oldest and most important public asset.

Is the Premier really saying that the 80% of Ontarians who oppose the Hydro One sale only have themselves to blame for trusting her?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We're talking about whether or not we had a mandate to proceed. The member has a convenient memory, Mr. Speaker. He forgets that around April and May 2014, we had a budget prepared, a draft budget which they would not approve. Before the election, we had a budget which indicated very, very clearly.

We also had appointed before the election the asset council, and they had a specific mandate, including looking at repurposing the assets in the energy sector. It was very, very clear. We're proceeding with that.

One of our main issues in that election campaign was providing infrastructure to the people of Ontario, which we're proceeding with. They're two things in the same issue. The mandate was there, the issue was there, and we're proceeding with it.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: My question is for the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. My

constituents in Halton are worried about the impact of climate change on our environment and our economy. Our region is a collection of local parks, rich farmland, conservation areas and the escarpment. Organizations like the Halton Environmental Network and the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation are working tirelessly to keep our riding green and clean.

We know the Earth's temperature is rising due to increased greenhouse gases. It's imperative that all governments take action—action to protect our communities, action to protect the agricultural sector and action to protect the air we breathe. That's why I was encouraged to see yesterday that we unanimously passed second reading of Bill 9, the ending coal act.

Mr. Speaker, through you: Could the minister please inform the House about what action our government has taken to eliminate the use of coal in Ontario?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I actually want to thank my colleagues the Ministers of Energy present and past, because this was remarkable leadership by the energy ministry and our utilities which contributed the largest greenhouse gas emissions reduction in Northern American history.

Some people have suggested that permanently passing legislation to keep this closed is somehow not serious politics. In fact, two other major OECD countries, because of other issues, have reintroduced coal. So we are actually locking down on something that is very serious, building our credibility.

I want to thank the member from Halton, who came to this House as a mum and as a person who's worked in communications, who well understands the importance of the environmental issues, realizing that these things have to be top-of-mind. I want to thank her for her question.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thanks again to the minister. Mr. Speaker, again my question is for the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. I think we could all agree that reducing coal was a significant step in the fight against climate change. I do find it strange, however, that the federal government, which used to be fiercely critical of ending coal, is now trying to take credit for our leadership on this key issue.

We know that action on climate change is vital for the future of our province and that when it comes to this important fight, there is still more work to be done. But I know we are up to the task. Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Could he please inform this House about what other action our government is taking in the fight against climate change?

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Hon. Glen R. Murray: One of the things we're doing is, we're trying to avoid red tape and regulation that will hurt business. I was interested to hear Mr. Harper yesterday, during the debate, take credit for our coal reductions, given that he has campaigned against them. He's out there campaigning in British Columbia against Premier Clark's efforts on carbon pricing. He's out campaigning in Alberta against Premier Notley's efforts to

reduce carbon. He's here in Ontario, complaining about our climate change strategy. He's in Quebec, attacking Premier Couillard's efforts to reduce it—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to ask the minister to refer that to government policy.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, what is he proposing to do? The exact opposite. He said yesterday that he will be proceeding with a sector-by-sector regulatory approach. This is the antithesis of the cap-and-trade systems we're involving.

As a matter of fact, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce came out and said that in contrast to a strict regulatory approach, like the federal government is proposing, policies can offer maximum flexibility, carbon pricing policies are much preferable and offer maximum—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. I would deeply appreciate all questions and all answers to be relevant to government policy. When we move over to any other level of government, it's not appropriate in the House during question period.

New question.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. The public accounts of Ontario were released yesterday, confirming what we all know: Ontario is the most indebted sub-national borrower on the entire planet.

But we also had confirmed one other item the Liberals denied for over a year: They sold Ontera, the telecommunications arm of Ontario Northland, for \$6 million. We stood in this Legislature and said it would actually cost the taxpayers between \$50 million and \$70 million if they went through with this fire sale. Now the public accounts have confirmed this. They disclose that the Liberals lost \$61 million selling off Ontera. How can this government justify this insulting loss to northern Ontario and this outrageous loss to taxpayers?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, first of all—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, we are very proud, of course, of the fact that we made a decision about a year and a half ago to keep four of the five lines of the ONTC in public hands.

The decision to move forward with the sale of the Ontera telecommunications wing was a well-thought-out one and, we very much believe, the right one, a necessary step to enable our government to focus strategic investments on the—

Interjections.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: We were determined to focus on the strategic transportation services that are so crucial to moving forward with a sustainable, long-term, efficient ONTC.

While there were short-term costs associated with the sale of Ontera, the costs of continued ownership unquestionably outweighed the short-term costs of the sale—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Premier: I can't see how this was well thought out. The government took a 100-year-old, \$70-million crown asset and gave it away for \$6 million. This sounds hauntingly familiar to what they're about to do with Hydro One.

But it gets worse. The total doesn't include the lawyers and the consultants who were paid \$6.5 million to advise the Liberals. You heard it, Speaker: They were paid \$6.5 million to tell the Liberals how to sell something for \$6 million.

They're a laughingstock. They bungled the sale. How do the Liberals expect the people to trust them with the sale of Hydro One when they lost \$61 million selling a smaller asset like Ontera?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: It's at least a tad ironic that the member asking this question is the one who was calling for the privatization of the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission. The fact is, I can pull the quotes out. You're not against privatization. We know that well. The member knows that, which is why he's been reluctant to ask questions in the Legislature.

The bottom line is that we made a decision that is in the best long-term interests of the corporation. We will continue to support the ONTC as it transforms its operations and focuses on core transportation services. We worked long and hard to make those decisions, working with the municipal advisory committee, and those decisions were to keep four of the five lines in public hands and to move Ontera into the private sector.

Our government remains absolutely committed to ensuring that northern communities and industries benefit from a viable, efficient and—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Windsor—Tecumseh, come to order.

New question.

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Premier. It's simply not enough to stand up and say you value our province's teachers and education workers but continue to ignore them at the table. Members of this House heard this morning from CUPE education workers, who have

been without a contract since September 2014 and are still seeking a fair deal. They still don't have one. Education workers clean and repair our schools, make sure all the proper forms go out and records are kept, and they provide one-on-one care for students with special needs—a crucial bridge between these students' complex needs and their educational outcomes. These students deserve to be successful too.

Why won't this government roll up its sleeves, get back to the bargaining table with our parties in the education system and treat this issue with urgency?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I must say that I agree with the member opposite on one issue. We do think that coming to agreement with our education workers is urgent and essential. In fact, that's why we have been in negotiations for the last two weeks, not just with CUPE, which represents many of our education workers, caretakers, maintenance, secretarial, clerical, education assistants, early childhood educators, professional student supporters, lunch-hour supervisors, all sorts of roles that are quite essential in our province's schools; we've also been negotiating with the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, which also represents a large number of education workers. It's because we recognize the role that those workers play as being so important to our schools that we have been negotiating.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Again to the Premier: We heard this morning how hard, how complex and how diverse the roles of our education support staff workers are in our schools. They've been clear in bargaining about what they want, what is best for not only workers but students as well: not a bottom line, not a final answer, but respect.

Why won't this government get back to bargaining in earnest with elementary teachers and education workers? Why is this government content to create crisis in our schools?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I can only repeat that we have been focused on negotiating with our education workers because we respect them, because we value them. As I said before, we have been negotiating with CUPE. We're looking forward to establishing more dates with CUPE. We have been making good progress. I think that there's real opportunity there for us to come together because CUPE has been quite clear about what it is they're asking for, and I think that we will be able to come together on our negotiations with that group.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M. Grant Crack: Ma question est pour la procureure générale, l'honorable Madeleine Meilleur.

Je sais que dans notre province, notre système de justice a deux langues officielles : le français et l'anglais. Dans ma circonscription de Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, je reçois quelquefois des commettants qui aimeraient des mises à jour face à certains défis auxquels ils font face dans le système judiciaire en français en Ontario.

1120

Monsieur le Président, est-ce que la procureure générale peut nous mettre à jour sur les activités de son ministère en ce qui a trait à l'accès à la justice pour les francophones de l'Ontario?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Merci à mon collègue et bon ami le député de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell pour sa question. Je sais qu'il est un fier défenseur de la francophonie dans sa circonscription.

Alors, notre gouvernement travaille sur le dossier. L'excellent rapport sur l'accès à la justice en français de 2012, du Comité consultatif de la magistrature et du barreau, mené par le juge Rouleau de la Cour d'appel et M^e Paul LeVay, nous a permis de cerner les lacunes qui demeurent et d'établir une stratégie pour aller de l'avant.

Nous avons entrepris un énorme travail sur toutes les recommandations de ce rapport qui touchaient le ministère du Procureur général. Cela incluait aussi la création d'un projet pilote, idée soutenue par le commissaire aux services en français dans son dernier rapport annuel, et justement nous avons lancé en mai dernier ce projet pilote au palais de justice d'Ottawa.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Question?

M. Grant Crack: Merci à la procureure générale pour sa réponse. Vendredi dernier, la journée des Franco-Ontariens a été célébrée dans toute la province, ainsi qu'à Queen's Park, avec la levée du drapeau en présence de la communauté francophone. Je tiens également à souligner la présence des francophones dans ma circonscription. J'ai eu le privilège d'être présent à deux événements dans Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, à Alexandria et à Hawkesbury.

Monsieur le Président, la procureure générale a mentionné dans sa réponse une recommandation portant sur la création d'un projet pilote. Est-ce que la procureure générale peut dire à l'Assemblée quel est le but, la portée et les résultats désirés de ce projet pilote?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Oui, ce projet pilote à Ottawa sera d'une durée d'un an et le but à long terme est de l'étendre à toute la province. Une équipe de projet est déjà en place pour mettre ceci en oeuvre, et ça devrait commencer au printemps 2015.

Alors, le projet pilote promouvra les pratiques exemplaires pour un accès fluide en français en se basant sur l'offre active de services. Notre objectif est de mieux faire connaître les droits des utilisateurs francophones afin d'améliorer notre système judiciaire.

Moi, j'étais à Sudbury vendredi dernier pour la levée du drapeau. C'était le 40^e anniversaire de notre beau drapeau franco-ontarien. J'étais là avec mon collègue le député de Sudbury, et ça a été une célébration vraiment extraordinaire avec beaucoup d'émotion. Alors, merci à tous ceux et celles qui ont célébré le 25 septembre dans leur circonscription. Merci.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is for the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Speaker, today we learned from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce that they have some very serious concerns about the Liberal cap-and-trade tax scheme, a system that we have yet to hear any details about. The Ontario chamber specifically mentioned that the government has yet to release any economic analysis of the cap-and-trade tax and that businesses across Ontario remain completely in the dark about plans for revenue and carbon credits.

What Ontario businesses need to succeed is certainty, yet the Liberal government is rushing its introduction in time for a Paris photo op. Mr. Speaker, when will the minister listen to the Ontario chamber and the greater business community and address the concerns outlined in this report?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I would like to read from the chamber of commerce report. It's very insightful: "Among strategies to reduce GHG emissions, businesses prefer market-based approaches that put a price on carbon, such as a ... cap and trade system. In contrast to a strict regulatory approach"—which denies businesses flexibility and innovation. Mr. Harper and your leader stand with the following position: "We're proceeding with a sector-by-sector regulatory approach."

Mr. Speaker, the government of Ontario and the Liberal party stands, with business, opposed to a job-killing regulatory regime, which Preston Manning and Jean Charest say will restrain the economy by 3.7% GDP growth. When will the member stand up against Mr. Brown, the member for Simcoe North, and Mr. Harper, the Prime Minister of this country, and fight the regulations that business doesn't want and work with this government—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Order.

Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I think we've just seen a new revenue tool for this government. They should be taxing hot air.

Back to the minister—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to ask for temperate language, please.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you, Speaker.

Back to the minister: The last thing Ontario needs is to rush into a system that will cripple business and cost more jobs. In California, the government took seven years to design their program, and in Quebec, it took five years to come up with their cap-and-trade tax scheme.

However, this government is steamrolling ahead with plans to announce Ontario's cap-and-trade details just seven months after the 2015 budget. We've seen the legacy of what happens when these Liberals rush into programs. Just look how SAMS turned out for everyone.

Businesses need to know what to expect; they need to know how to plan accordingly. Will the minister commit to publicly releasing an economic analysis of the cap-and-trade scheme before Paris?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: That's a rather passing-strange comment for the member opposite. We've been at this for years. We passed legislation back in 2008 that

involved years of consultation. We've been meeting with business on a weekly basis and we are in the middle—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: You mean all those consultations in March about carbon were for naught?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Huron—Bruce, come to order.

Hon. Glen R. Murray:—of a multi-year consultation that goes on—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Huron—Bruce, second time. You asked the question; listen to the answer.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We've been working with business on a weekly basis.

I'm confused by the member opposite's questions. Businesses said they don't want a regulatory sector-by-sector approach, which the leader of her party and the Prime Minister believe in. Preston Manning, Jean Charest, Chris Ragan, the entire Ecofiscal Commission—as a matter of fact, in the US, Citibank's major study on cap-and-trade shows that you would lose 3.7% of GDP growth over the next five years. With a cap-and-trade system, you see net new growth—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier. In the past two weeks, through media reports, we've learned that you can be a top procurement executive at Infrastructure Ontario, you could admit to procurement fraud, and absolutely nothing will happen to you. In fact, senior executives at Infrastructure Ontario, and possibly the board, can know about your fraud and you still get to stay in business. Even the Premier's chief of staff can know about your fraud and, instead of being fired, as would be the reasonable approach, you get a promotion and get put in charge of procuring a \$300-million patient centre at St. Mike's Hospital.

Will the government commit to a truly independent investigation of this fraud and cover-up and make the findings available to the public?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I appreciate the question. There's a little bit of different information that the member's sharing with the House that's not exactly accurate. The fact of the matter is, this is a serious matter, and a matter that not only does this government take seriously, but so do the hospitals that have had some association with this individual.

All the hospitals involved to date are conducting third-party analysis and review of the time that individual spent in their hospitals or working on projects there. We're doing the same prudent and diligent review. In fact, we've hired a forensic accounting firm to look at the transactions the person was involved in. We've hired a legal firm to look at the issues that the gentleman was involved in, as well as the issues around his departure.

I've hired a third-party adviser as well to oversee the process, so I think we're taking the prudent actions we must and I think we'll continue to proceed in that way.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The minister knows that an outsourced investigation is not the same as an independent investigation. We have evidence of a culture within Infrastructure Ontario that tolerates and covers up procurement fraud, but the government has trusted IO to investigate its own cover-up.

Last December, the Auditor General found that conflict of interest guidelines at Infrastructure Ontario are routinely ignored. The Premier has also stacked the IO board with former executives of companies that do business with IO.

1130

Will this government take this investigation away from Infrastructure Ontario and commit to a truly independent public investigation? Or at the very least, will they invite the OPP to set up a permanent detachment here at Queen's Park to investigate the never-ending list of scandals that this government is embroiled in?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We are actually taking this very seriously, unlike the member opposite, who seems to want to just play politics with this, which I understand. That's the role of the opposition.

We've got to keep in mind that the alleged actions of this individual took place outside of his work at IO, and the other actions that we're talking about took place after this individual left IO. This leads us to the question: Was there anything untoward or were there any anomalies that took place during his time at IO?

That's why we've hired a forensic accounting firm to take a look to see if there are any anomalies. That's why we've brought in independent legal advice, to do the same thing. And that's why I've brought in an independent adviser to oversee the process to ensure that the public interest is protected. I think that's the right action to take at this time. I think it's being very prudent. We're taking the matter seriously, as I know, really, the member is. I think we're doing what we ought to be doing at this stage.

MUNICIPAL PLANNING

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: This question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. This House has been debating the Smart Growth for Our Communities Act, which proposes important changes to the Planning Act and the Development Charges Act.

The minister and other colleagues are aware that before coming to Queen's Park, I was a city councillor, chair of Toronto's planning committee, and my driving passion in elected office has been urban planning, city building, and now, province building. For this reason, I'm delighted to be part of a government that has proposed important changes to both the Planning Act and the Development Charges Act that will improve the processes communities and residents use to determine how

their neighbourhoods grow, and how to plan and pay for this growth.

Mr. Speaker, through you, can the minister tell this House what motivated these proposed changes, and provide a few examples?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Thanks to the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore for his long-standing and enthusiastic approach to municipal planning.

Speaker, Ontarians deserve a predictable, fair and transparent system guiding how their communities will grow. Over the last 18 months, we have consulted widely with stakeholders, we've held more than 20 public workshops, and we welcomed over 1,200 mailed-in and electronic submissions. What did we hear? We heard that Ontarians want to have a greater say in the planning process that shapes their communities.

Changes to the Planning Act, if passed, would ensure residents are better consulted on the future of their communities at the beginning of the process, so there are less late-in-the-game appeals to the Ontario Municipal Board.

Also, it will encourage more parkland and green space across the province. Because of that, municipalities will need to put in place a parks plan—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: Thank you to the minister for that answer. If passed, these changes would make the planning and appeals process more predictable and give more municipalities independence. This is what residents of Etobicoke–Lakeshore and across the province have been asking for.

This legislation proposes changes to the Development Charges Act that will also be critical for smart community growth. It fits into several related steps put forward by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, as directed by the Premier in her mandate letter to the minister.

Mr. Speaker, through you, will the minister now tell this House how the Smart Growth for Our Communities Act also proposes to change the Development Charges Act? In addition, what are the next steps the minister will undertake in the coming months that will also allow for important changes in municipal planning?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Mr. Speaker, through you, the changes we propose to the Development Charges Act aim to give municipalities more opportunities to fund growth-related infrastructure like transit and recycling. It would also support curbing urban sprawl in favour of livable, walkable communities that will help to create jobs and grow our economy.

As the Premier instructed in my mandate letter, we will also be reviewing the scope and effectiveness of the Ontario Municipal Board and updating our Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy. Both of these parallel projects will contribute to our work in fostering vibrant and complete communities, with abundant green space, thriving economies and a range of housing choices. Those future initiatives will build on the strong foundation we've been busy laying over the last several months.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Every day, Ontarians see more proof that this Liberal government just isn't in it for them anymore. The Premier's office is so embroiled in scandal and has set the bar so low on ethical behaviour that even the Toronto Star has had enough. Meanwhile, this minister rewards well-paid Pan Am Games executives with extravagant bonuses while our home care services are in shambles. Again, their priorities are out of step with hard-working Ontarians. Where I come from, you don't pay a bonus without proof that it was earned.

Speaker, if the minister is so confident that Games executives delivered, why oppose being accountable and transparent by having an independent audit before cutting those cheques?

Hon. Michael Coteau: The last time I checked, the Pan Am/Parapan Am Games were the most successful games in the history of this province. The member opposite knows that we put together a plan working with TO2015. I have to remind the member opposite that the Leader of the Opposition's government were equal partners at the table for TO2015 when those incentives were put in place.

More importantly, Mr. Speaker, these were the greatest games that were ever held in Canada—217 medals for our athletes. The Parapan Am Games were the most successful parasport games in the history of this province. We saw an increase in spending right across the GTA and within the 15 municipalities and Toronto. In fact, we saw an 8.8% increase in debit card and electronic transfers of spending.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's obvious that the minister is confused about the issue. We know the athletes performed, because we can count the medals and the personal bests. We can't do that when it comes to knowing if the games were on budget. Even the Premier admits that she doesn't know.

So I've made a reasonable request, in the interest of transparency and accountability. Tomorrow, my motion asking the Auditor General to audit the Pan Am Games will be debated at the public accounts committee. Speaker, will the minister write to the committee to support my motion, and will he put a freeze on those bonuses until the auditor can do her work?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Michael Coteau: The member opposite knows that these have been the most transparent games in the history of any sporting event in this country. In fact, when you look around the world and you compare our practices, we've had five technical briefings, many of which the opposition didn't show up to, to actually get the data. Everything was open to FOI, and we've had a lot of those requests come through.

These have been very transparent games. We reported a \$56-million surplus in infrastructure months ago, and it has only been a month and a bit since these games have been over. We will have a technical briefing, and I believe we will have some great news to share with the opposition around the success from a financial perspective of these games.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the President of the Treasury Board. Yesterday, former Justice Stephen Goudge released his review of presidential compensation packages at Western University. The review was conducted because of a double salary payout that legally allowed the president to earn almost \$1 million last year, a payout that Justice Goudge believes should no longer be permitted.

This is yet another example of this government's failure to rein in executive compensation. In the last few months, Ontarians have learned about a \$4-million wage package for the CEO of Hydro One, million-dollar salaries for CCAC home care contractors, and \$5.7 million in bonuses for Pan Am Games executives. Will the minister act now to prohibit million-dollar salaries in the post-secondary sector by implementing the private member's bill that I introduced in April?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We on this side believe that the people of Ontario do have a right to know how compensation is structured for the broader public sector. That's why we introduced the Broader Public Sector Executive Compensation Act. It is still a mystery to me why the party opposite did not support that bill. It was one of the more surreal moments in this House, I have to say.

But what I can tell you is, this act enables the government to directly control the compensation of designated senior executives in the broader public sector by establishing compensation frameworks. That work is under way now. We are taking a thoughtful and balanced approach to it. We are balancing the interests of Ontario taxpayers and the need to properly compensate senior executives in our public sector.

DEFERRED VOTES

SMART GROWTH FOR OUR COMMUNITIES ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 POUR UNE CROISSANCE INTELLIGENTE DE NOS COLLECTIVITÉS

Deferred vote on the motion that the question now be put on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 73, An Act to amend the Development Charges Act, 1997 and the Planning Act / Projet de loi 73, Loi

modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur les redevances d'aménagement et la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1140 to 1145.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On April 21, 2015, Mr. McMeekin moved second reading of Bill 73, An Act to amend the Development Charges Act, 1997 and the Planning Act.

Mr. Colle has moved that the question be now put. All those in favour of Mr. Colle's motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Fraser, John	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Anderson, Granville	Gravelle, Michael	Moridi, Reza
Baker, Yvan	Hoggarth, Ann	Murray, Glen R.
Balkissoon, Bas	Hoskins, Eric	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Ballard, Chris	Hunter, Mitzie	Naqvi, Yasir
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jaczek, Helena	Potts, Arthur
Bradley, James J.	Kiwala, Sophie	Qaadi, Shafiq
Chiarelli, Bob	Kwinter, Monte	Rinaldi, Lou
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Marie-France	Sandals, Liz
Coteau, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Crack, Grant	MacCharles, Tracy	Sousa, Charles
Damerla, Dipika	Mangat, Amrit	Takhar, Harinder S.
Del Duca, Steven	Martins, Cristina	Vernile, Daiene
Dhillon, Vic	Matthews, Deborah	Wong, Soo
Dickson, Joe	Mauro, Bill	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dong, Han	McGarry, Kathryn	Zimmer, David
Duguid, Brad	McMeekin, Ted	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Mellieur, Madeleine	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hardeman, Eric	Pettapiece, Randy
Arnott, Ted	Hatfield, Percy	Sattler, Peggy
Bailey, Robert	Horwath, Andrea	Scott, Laurie
Barrett, Toby	MacLaren, Jack	Singh, Jagmeet
Brown, Patrick	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Todd
Clark, Steve	Mantha, Michael	Tabuns, Peter
Fedeli, Victor	Martow, Gila	Taylor, Monique
Fife, Catherine	McDonnell, Jim	Thompson, Lisa M.
Forster, Cindy	Miller, Norm	Vanthof, John
French, Jennifer K.	Miller, Paul	Walker, Bill
Gates, Wayne	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Gélinas, France	Natyshak, Taras	Yakabuski, John
Gretzky, Lisa	Nicholls, Rick	Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 52; the nays are 39.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Mr. McMeekin has moved second reading of Bill 73, An Act to amend the Development Charges Act, 1997 and the Planning Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1150 to 1151.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Gélinas, France	Munro, Julia
Anderson, Granville	Gravelle, Michael	Murray, Glen R.
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gretzky, Lisa	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Naqvi, Yasir
Bailey, Robert	Hatfield, Percy	Natyshak, Taras
Baker, Yvan	Hoggarth, Ann	Nicholls, Rick
Balkissoon, Bas	Horwath, Andrea	Pettapiece, Randy
Ballard, Chris	Hoskins, Eric	Potts, Arthur
Barrett, Toby	Hunter, Mitzie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jaczek, Helena	Rinaldi, Lou
Bradley, James J.	Kiwala, Sophie	Sandals, Liz
Brown, Patrick	Kwinter, Monte	Sattler, Peggy
Chiarelli, Bob	Lalonde, Marie-France	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	MacCharles, Tracy	Singh, Jagmeet
Coteau, Michael	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Todd
Crack, Grant	Mangat, Amrit	Sousa, Charles
Damerla, Dipika	Mantha, Michael	Tabuns, Peter
Del Duca, Steven	Martins, Cristina	Takhar, Harinder S.
Hillon, Vic	Martow, Gila	Taylor, Monique
Dickson, Joe	Matthews, Deborah	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dong, Han	Mauro, Bill	Vanthof, John
Duguid, Brad	McDonell, Jim	Vernie, Daiene
Fedeli, Victor	McGarry, Kathryn	Walker, Bill
Fife, Catherine	McMeekin, Ted	Wilson, Jim
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wong, Soo
Forster, Cindy	Milczyn, Peter Z.	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Fraser, John	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
French, Jennifer K.	Miller, Paul	Yurek, Jeff
Gates, Wayne	Moridi, Reza	Zimmer, David

Our Georgetown Hospital Foundation staff and volunteers do an amazing job. I especially want to acknowledge Jennifer McNally, the foundation's manager for annual giving and special events.

The money raised by the foundation is spent to improve health care services through the purchase of medical equipment and enhancements to the hospital's programs and facilities. I try to attend the walk every year, and I was glad to see Halton Hills regional councillor Jane Fogal and town councillor Jon Hurst there as well.

Since the Georgetown Hospital opened its doors in 1961, it's been a pillar in our community, providing outstanding health care services to local residents. In 2011, I was glad to help secure a promise from the government of up to \$2.6 million to support needed renovations at the hospital. In addition to the province's commitment, money raised in the community paid for most of the project. After working together, we now have a new emergency room, CT scanner and upgrades to the diagnostic imaging department—better health care, closer to home.

Someday, we'll need a brand new Georgetown Hospital. It goes without saying that I would want to support whatever hospital redevelopment project our community submits to the ministry.

I want to thank everyone involved. Working together, we make progress.

MAYA MIKHAEL

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 90; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? Referred to committee?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Referred to the social policy committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): So ordered.

There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1154 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WALK OR RUN FOR GEORGETOWN HOSPITAL

Mr. Ted Arnott: Yesterday after question period, I was very glad to tell the Minister of Health about the very successful Walk or Run for Georgetown Hospital, which my wife, Lisa, and I attended this past Sunday morning. This annual walk is a great community event, and this year it raised \$37,000 for the Georgetown Hospital.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to stand in the House today to talk about a young lady—now, I know it's not usually polite to talk about women's ages, but I'm going to guess that Maya is probably about 11 years old, and she's quite an exceptional young lady.

Maya Mikhael is the founder of Maya's Friends, a group of 22 young girls—and occasionally they have a young fellow or two who come out and help—who have raised funds to help those in need in my riding of Windsor West, as well as across all of Windsor and Essex county.

As a result of their yearly signature fundraising event, Maya's Lemonade Stand, Maya and her friends raised \$3,288, as well as collecting hundreds of cans of food. They have donated the canned goods and the money that they collected to the Downtown Mission, the Salvation Army and the Windsor Youth Centre, which we lovingly refer to as the WYC. They all benefit from the fundraising efforts and the generosity of Maya's Friends.

Also notable is the partnership between Maya's team and the Real Canadian Superstore. The RCSS generously donates gift cards and food items at cost in order to maximize the efforts of Maya's Friends for a number of low-income or homeless residents of Windsor and Essex county.

It is with great pride that I stand in the Legislature and thank Maya and her team of friends for their continued efforts to make life a little bit easier for those living in poverty.

NORTHUMBERLAND–QUINTE WEST DAY

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It gives me great pleasure to be able to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues from all sides of the House for taking time out of their busy schedules to support Northumberland–Quinte West Day last Thursday. I was proud to showcase my riding and to remind them of the exciting things going on in eastern Ontario. Mr. Speaker, I tell you, the day was a great success, and I'm truly grateful for the support shown by all members and their staff who attended.

I'd also like to thank the many businesses and organizations that participated in showcasing only a small portion of the amazing things that Northumberland–Quinte West has to offer: people like Betty's butter tarts, Burnham Family Farm Market, Northumberland County Economic Development and Tourism, William Street brewery, Quinte West Economic Development, the city of Quinte West, Rachel's Tarts, Wild Card Brewing Company, Kaley's kale chips, Habitat for Humanity Northumberland, Haute Goat, Empire Cheese, The Big Apple, Grills Orchards, Mrs. B's chocolates, L'Auberge de France, La Cultura Salumi, Nestlé, Brighton Springs, Quaker bakeries, Trenton; and Saputo cheese products.

This is the third year we have hosted this event. I was very pleased with the participation from our community—which included folks from across the riding—as well as the many different products displayed. I'm excited to make next year an even bigger and better event.

BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'd like to take a moment to recognize September as Big Brother Big Sister Month. For over a century, Big Brothers Big Sisters has been helping Canadian children and youth reach their full potential by providing them with proper mentorship. Currently, Big Brothers Big Sisters has more than 115 agencies in 1,000 communities across Canada that help more than 42,000 children. In Ontario, Big Brothers Big Sisters helps more than 21,000 children and youth across 500 communities.

Mentoring has remarkably changed over the course of time from simply matching a role model in your life, whether it's a teacher, a friend or a family member. Now there are mentoring programs for groups, and are designed for different needs, such as the importance of physical activity or eating healthy.

Mentoring has profound benefits for a child, including helping a child stay in school and establish confidence in their ability to do well in school; helping instill in children that school can be enjoyable; and teaching the importance of doing well.

Even with all of this great work, there are more than 8,000 children and youth in Ontario waiting for that mentoring opportunity. Every child deserves a role model in their life to instill the confidence to reach their fullest potential. If you've ever had a role model in your life, you know the profound effect it can have.

If you can, I encourage you to donate your time to become a "Big" for Big Brothers Big Sisters and make a difference.

PENSION PLANS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Did you know that the OLG has locked out its workers over pensions? Since September 19, Unifor workers working at Sudbury, Woodbine and Brantford have been locked out by the OLG. They were locked out by the government. Why? Because those workers want to keep their pensions. It's as simple as that. The government has promised that as slots were going to be privatized and given to privatized casino operators, that they would have a pension. But they are not willing to say that they will have an opportunity to negotiate their pensions. So what does that mean? That means that Unifor employees who presently have and belong to the Public Service Pension Plan won't be allowed to continue in this pension plan. They will have to take whatever the private casino operator has to offer them.

This is a shame. It's pretty hard to believe that this is happening when we have a Liberal government that goes out of its way to say that every worker in this province should have a pension plan. Not only do they say this; you cannot flip on any TV channel without seeing those ads about the new Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. But then you have 1,000 workers who have a pension plan, and all they want to do is to keep it when they get privatized. And what do they get? They get to walk the picket lines for the last two weeks.

That's a shame. The government has to mandate them back to the negotiation table so they keep their pension plans.

POLYCYSTIC KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Yvan Baker: Polycystic kidney disease, or PKD, is one of the most common life-threatening genetic diseases in the world. It currently affects 66,000 Canadians and over 12.5 million people worldwide, including people in my riding of Etobicoke Centre. There is no cure. Last year, I had the opportunity to talk to a doctor about the devastating effects of PKD. What he said was that to fight PKD, it's important that we raise awareness, that we raise money to find a cure, but that we also find ways to provide support to those who are suffering with PKD.

One organization that has done so much work in helping to combat the disease is the PKD Foundation of Canada. The organization started out in the living room of an Oakville home in 1993, and now has chapters around the country. It raises awareness and funds for research, and is awarded hundreds of thousands of dollars in research grants.

I was happy to join the PKD Foundation this past Sunday at Centennial Park in my riding of Etobicoke Centre for their annual Walk for PKD. Since 2007, the event has raised almost \$700,000, including \$134,000

last year. The turnout for this year's walk was excellent, and I'm sure that it was a great success.

While at the event, I had a chance to meet with the organization's hard-working team, including executive director Jeff Robertson and the rest of the organization's board. I'd like to congratulate them once again on the walk, and for all the work that they do to help fight PKD and to help those who are fighting PKD.

1510

It is with the help of organizations like the PKD Foundation that we will do exactly what is needed: continue to raise awareness, raise funds to find a cure and support those who are suffering from PKD. Thanks to organizations like the PKD foundation, we will defeat this disease one day, once and for all.

ADVANCING WOMEN CONFERENCE

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to share today with my fellow members that this year the Advancing Women Conference will be taking place in Toronto, on October 5 and 6. This unique opportunity will focus on recognizing and advancing the role of women in agriculture.

The Toronto conference follows a similar event in western Canada, at which there were roughly 600 women in various agriculture and food roles in attendance this year alone. The conference will feature keynote presentations from agricultural leaders, most of whom are women, on topics related to leadership development, finances, career development, community, communication and health. Most importantly, the conference will provide the tools needed to break down Ontario's agri-food glass ceiling, by discussing the issues that specifically affect women in this province and across eastern Canada.

This event, next week in Toronto, will also aim to include diverse perspectives from across the industry. From farm owners and operators to the agri-business sector, this event will bring women together to discuss themes relevant to the agri-food sector as a whole. For instance, the deputy minister for the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Deb Stark, will be speaking about "Mud, Mascara and Other Grand Challenges." The executive director for the national organization known as Farm & Food Care, Crystal MacKay, will be speaking about "Searching for Unicorns, the Lochness Monster and Work-Life Balance."

Speaker, this will be a great event. With the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians' Ontario outreach program coming to this province from November 5 to 8, as well as my agri-food jobs motion, set to occur next week, I look forward to continuing to promote women in the agri-food sector.

SAVE THE OAK RIDGES MORAINE (STORM) COALITION

Mr. Chris Ballard: I appreciate this opportunity to tell the House about an important milestone in my riding

of Newmarket–Aurora. Speaker, 25 years ago, a group of citizens from across Ontario, concerned about the ecologically sensitive geography known as the Oak Ridges moraine, came together to form an advocacy group called STORM: Save the Oak Ridges Moraine. Since 1989, STORM has worked tirelessly at the local and regional levels to ensure that municipalities make planning decisions that respect the significance of the moraine.

This past Sunday, supporters gathered in Aurora to celebrate the 25th anniversary of STORM's founding, to celebrate the important contributions the group and its partner organizations have made, and to recognize 25 individuals for the work they have done on behalf of STORM and the moraine.

In case anyone needs a refresher, the Oak Ridges moraine is a major landform, unique to southern Ontario, and extends 160 kilometres from the Niagara Escarpment in the west to the Trent River system in the east. Thirteen thousand years ago, as the glaciers began to retreat from southern Ontario, torrential flood channels developed beneath the melting ice, carrying sediments and dumping them into what became the moraine.

Speaker, one of the moraine's most important functions is the water recharge and discharge area, sustaining the health of many watersheds. It is accurately described as southern Ontario's rain barrel. I'm proud to say that a good portion of my riding of Newmarket–Aurora sits atop the moraine, and we're richer for it.

Congratulations and thank you to STORM for the work that it has done in preserving the Oak Ridges moraine.

MICHAEL BURGESS

Mr. Mike Colle: Yesterday, September 28, Michael Burgess, a remarkable Canadian, passed away in a Toronto hospice, surrounded by friend and family. This 70-year-old Canadian singer extraordinaire had been battling cancer for years.

Burgess is most fondly remembered for his role in *Les Misérables*, in which he played Jean Valjean in more than 1,000 performances—I'm sure a lot of people here were there—at the Toronto Royal Alexandra Theatre and on tour across Canada. Burgess took the role across Canada on the first national tour of the production, and also appeared for the 10th-anniversary concert at the Royal Albert Hall in London.

His other major performances included *Man of La Mancha*, *Blood Brothers* and starring roles throughout Canada and the United States. I saw him in that incredible feature here in Toronto also. We can all never forget, for instance, when he sang *O Canada*, our national anthem, at Leafs games for many years. Burgess was also the first person to sing *O Canada* at the World Series in 1992.

Michael was born in Regina and spent his formative years in Toronto. He went to St. Michael's Choir School just down the street here. He later attended the University

of Ottawa. Burgess married his fellow Les Misérables performer Susan Gilmour in 1994.

Sadly, we'll all miss this incredible voice. I know the Royal Alexandra Theatre will dim their marquee lights this evening. We've lost an incredible Canadian whose heavenly voice we will surely miss, but now he's singing up there with Saint Peter.

Rest in peace, Michael Burgess.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated September 29, 2015, from the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. Grant Crack: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on General Government and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 66, An Act to protect and restore the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin / Projet de loi 66, Loi visant la protection et le rétablissement du bassin des Grands Lacs et du fleuve Saint-Laurent.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated September 14, 2015, the bill is ordered for third reading.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's lack of priority funding is causing the closure of the South Bruce Grey Health Centre restorative care Chesley site as of May 1st, 2015; and

"Whereas in three years, the 10 beds dedicated to this program have seen over 300 patients utilize the program

and at this time there is a waiting list for this successful program; and

"Whereas currently over 83% of patients are discharged from the restorative care program to home after a two- to eight-week program which has prepared them to confidently return home, recognizing this program increases their quality of life through the regaining of strength, balance and independence; and

"Whereas the closure of this program will deprive seniors and other eligible clients from the many health and mobility benefits that the restorative care program offers; and

"Whereas the alternative to the restorative care program will see patients staying in active medical beds longer, while they wait for long-term care; and

"Whereas the return of investment on the restorative care program far exceeds conventional approaches when considering the value of quality of life in the patients' own home as compared to a long-term-care facility; and

"Whereas it is our understanding that the CCAC has cut back its services enabling patients to remain confidently in their home;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the South Bruce Grey Health Centre restorative care Chesley site be recognized for its success; and for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to showcase this program as a model to be followed across the province; and

"That the closing of the South Bruce Grey Health Centre restorative care Chesley site on May 1st, 2015, not proceed and the provincial government support this health care model with base funding as an investment in the health and welfare of patients so they can confidently remain in their home."

I agree with this petition. I'll affix my signature and send it to the desk.

MISSING PERSONS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have a petition called "Ontario Needs Missing Persons Legislation," from people across Ontario to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario does not have missing persons legislation; and

"Whereas police are not able to conduct a thorough investigation upon receipt of a missing person report where criminal activity is not considered the cause; and

"Whereas this impedes investigators in determining the status and possibly the location of missing persons; and

"Whereas this legislation exists and is effective in other provinces; and

"Whereas negotiating rights to safety that do not violate rights to privacy has been a challenge in establishing missing persons law;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask that the Attorney General's office work with the office of the privacy commissioner to implement missing persons legislation that grants investigators the opportunity to apply for permissions to access information that will assist in determining the safety or whereabouts of missing persons for whom criminal activity is not considered the cause."

1520

I wholeheartedly support this petition and send it to the Clerk with Alexander.

LUNG HEALTH

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children. Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

"In the Ontario Lung Association report, *Your Lungs, Your Life*, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry's private member's bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

"Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage."

I agree with this petition. I affix my name and send it with page Grace.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Jim Wilson: This is a petition to lower hydro rates.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas household electricity bills have skyrocketed by 56% and electricity rates have tripled as a result of the Liberal government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

"Whereas the billion-dollar gas plants cancellation, wasteful and unaccountable spending at Ontario Power Generation and the unaffordable subsidies in the Green Energy Act will result in electricity bills climbing by another 35% by 2017 and 45% by 2020; and

"Whereas the Liberal government wasted \$2 billion on the flawed smart meter program; and

"Whereas the recent announcement to implement the Ontario Electricity Support Program will see average household hydro bills increase an additional \$137 per year starting in 2016; and

"Whereas the soaring cost of electricity is straining family budgets, and hurting the ability of manufacturers and small businesses in the province to compete and create new jobs; and

"Whereas home heating and electricity are a necessity for families in Ontario who cannot afford to continue footing the bill for the government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately implement policies ensuring Ontario's power consumers, including families, farmers and employers, have affordable and reliable electricity."

I couldn't have written it better myself. Of course I'm going to sign it.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

M^{me} France G  linas: I have this petition that comes from people in my riding, including Mr. Emile Prudhomme from Val Therese in my riding of Nickel Belt, and it reads as follows:

"Privatizing Hydro One: Another Wrong Choice.

"Whereas once you privatize Hydro One, there's no return;

"We will lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals;

"We will lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

"Whereas we'll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what's happened elsewhere;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it, and ask Jaleelah to bring it to the Clerk.

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'm pleased to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas some establishments have instituted unfair tipping practices in which a portion of tips and gratuities are being deducted and kept by owners;

"Whereas employees in establishments where tipping is a standard practice, such as restaurants, bars and hair salons, supplement their income with tips and gratuities and depend on those to maintain an adequate standard of living;

"Whereas customers expect that when they leave a tip or gratuity that the benefit will be going to the employees who directly contributed to their positive experience;

"Whereas most establishments do respect their employees and do not collect their tips and gratuities unfairly and thus are left at a disadvantage compared to those owners who use tips and gratuities to pad their margins;

"Whereas other jurisdictions in North America such as Quebec, New Brunswick and New York City have passed legislation to protect employees' tips;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support Bill 12, the Protecting Employees' Tips Act, 2014, and help shield Ontario employees and businesses from operators with improper tipping practices while protecting accepted and standard practices such as tip pooling among employees."

I certainly agree with this petition, having introduced a private member's bill, and leave it with Duha.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further petitions? The member for Woodstock.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Oxford, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oxford.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much. It does include the great city of Woodstock, so you were right on the money.

I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the purpose of Ontario's Environmental Protection Act (EPA) is to 'provide for the protection and conservation of the natural environment.' RSO 1990, c. E.19, s. 3.; and

"Whereas 'all landfills will eventually release leachate to the surrounding environment and therefore all landfills will have some impact on the water quality of the local ecosystem.'—Threats to Sources of Drinking Water and Aquatic Health in Canada;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That section 27 of the EPA should be reviewed and amended immediately to prohibit the establishment of new or expanded landfills at fractured bedrock sites and other hydrogeologically unsuitable locations within the province of Ontario."

I thank you very much for allowing me to present this petition. I affix my signature, as I agree with it.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to introduce a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads:

"Whereas once you privatize hydro, there's no return; and

"We'll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

"We'll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

"We'll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what's happened elsewhere;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come."

I agree with this petition. I will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerks' table via Krishaj.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly entitled "Fluoridate All Ontario Drinking Water," and it reads as follows:

"Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

"Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

"Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

"Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario."

I agree with and I'm pleased to sign this petition and to send it down with page Gabriel.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas collecting and restoring old vehicles honours Ontario's automotive heritage while contributing to the economy through the purchase of goods and services, tourism, and support for special events; and

"Whereas the stringent application of emissions regulations for older cars equipped with newer engines can result in fines and additional expenses that discourage car collectors and restorers from pursuing their hobby; and

"Whereas newer engines installed by hobbyists in vehicles over 20 years old provide cleaner emissions than the original equipment; and

"Whereas car collectors typically use their vehicles only on an occasional basis, during four to five months of the year;

1530

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians who collect and restore old vehicles by amending the appropriate laws and regulations to ensure vehicles over 20 years old and exempt from Drive Clean testing shall also be exempt from additional emissions requirements enforced by the Ministry of the Environment and governing the installation of newer engines into old cars and trucks."

I'm pleased to affix my signature and send the petition to the table with page Eastyn.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further petitions? The member for Nickel Belt. That's the reason why I keep forgetting you.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Sorry, Speaker. I didn't realize that Lisa stood up at the same time I did.

I have a petition given to me by Paulette Guillet from Hanmer in my riding. It reads as follows:

"Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

"Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

"Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas price regulation; and

"Whereas jurisdictions with gas price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario" to "mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Krishaj to bring it to the Clerk.

GO TRANSIT

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition that was given to me by my residents in Cambridge.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Cambridge, Ontario, is a municipality of over 125,000 people, many of whom commute into the greater Toronto area daily; and

"Whereas the current options available for travel into the GTA are inefficient and time-consuming, as well as environmentally damaging; and

"Whereas the residents of Cambridge believe that they would be well-served by rail transit that connects this city to the rail station in Milton, and that this infrastructure would have positive, tangible economic benefits to the province of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Direct crown agency Metrolinx to commission a feasibility study into building a rail line that connects the city of Cambridge to the GO train station in Milton, and to complete this study in a timely manner and communicate the results to the municipal government of Cambridge."

I agree with it, will affix my signature and give it to page Sameer to bring down.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The time for petitions has now expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

POLICE RECORD CHECKS REFORM ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA RÉFORME DES VÉRIFICATIONS DE DOSSIERS DE POLICE

Mr. Naqvi moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 113, An Act respecting police record checks /
Projet de loi 113, Loi concernant les vérifications de dossiers de police.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, before I speak on Bill 113, I just want to inform you that I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Scarborough—Rouge River.

It is my honour to begin the second reading of the Police Record Checks Reform Act, 2015. Bill 113 is all about protecting individual civil liberties and public safety. The proposed legislation would ensure a province-wide standard for police record checks, and will eliminate the disclosure of non-criminal records to increase employment and volunteering opportunities for countless Ontarians across our province. This approach will help build stronger, safer communities right across Ontario.

I'm pleased to be joined today by leaders from Ontario's policing partners, civil liberties organizations and mental health associations. They've all been true champions on the issue of information disclosed in police record checks. Joining us today are Bruce Chapman and Stephen Reid from the Police Association of Ontario, Jacqueline Tasca from the John Howard Society, Runako Gregg of the African Canadian Legal Clinic and Laura Berger of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association. From the Canadian Mental Health Association we have Joe

Kim, who is the director of communications; Daniel Nugent-Bowman, who is the communications and marketing officer; Jenna Hitchcox, who is the project coordinator; and Uppala Chandrasekera, who is the director of public policy. I want to welcome them all to Queen's Park today and thank them for their work on this important bill. It is great that they are here today in support of this bill. Many of their organizations joined me also in June when I announced this legislation.

Last year, we heard from our Premier, Kathleen Wynne, when she expressed her concern over the inappropriate disclosure of information through police record checks. At that time, the Premier made a commitment to address the concerns that were raised to her. In fact, it is expressly laid out as a priority in the mandate letter that was given to me by the Premier. I'm pleased to stand here today as we take one more step in completing that goal.

This landmark legislation, if passed, will create clear, consistent and comprehensive rules on how police record checks are requested, conducted and disclosed for the first time in our province's history. The main goal of the legislation would be to strictly limit the disclosure of non-conviction information such as mental health information.

There are times when there is a need to screen an individual for criminal history that would prevent them from holding a particular kind of job or volunteer position that they are being considered for in order to keep our children and elderly safe. That is what a record check is for. It was never intended to negatively impact individuals by imposing unnecessary barriers through the release of records of police contacts that do not pertain to criminal activity. We have heard from many Ontarians that they have faced unnecessary barriers because of inappropriate disclosure of non-conviction and non-criminal information in their police record checks.

Through reports from organizations such as the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and the John Howard Society of Ontario, we have heard about people who learned during routine record checks that their records included non-criminal contact that they had with the police.

Media coverage has also focused public attention on some of the key issues related to how record checks are conducted in Ontario. We have all heard the stories outlining the negative, unintended consequences of record checks that many individuals have experienced: people having difficulties with employment, volunteering and education that resulted from records being inappropriately disclosed, such as non-criminal information.

In many of these cases, these individuals were denied employment, had their education placed in jeopardy, were denied access to their chosen vocations or lost out on other important opportunities.

Although there may be a need to screen individuals for specific criminal matters to ensure they're suitable to hold a particular job or volunteer position, a record check should not impose unnecessary systemic barriers to em-

ployment, education, volunteer work or other life opportunities.

Over the past several months, we have been working hard with our partners: police services, volunteer organizations, civil liberties organizations and advocacy groups. What we heard is that there is a need for a consistent province-wide approach to police record checks that will keep our communities safe while protecting individuals' privacy.

The government committed to bringing forward change with respect to police record checks, and this legislation fulfills that commitment. Quite simply, a police record check should never disclose personal health information or identify that someone was a victim or witness to a crime.

If passed, the Police Record Checks Reform Act would set province-wide standards by establishing specific types of checks, strictly limiting the release of non-conviction and prohibiting the release of non-criminal information.

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Our legislation covers a lot of ground, but at its heart, it does four very important things. First, it standardizes the three types of record checks that can be requested. They are: (1) a criminal record check; (2) a criminal record and judicial matters check; and (3) a vulnerable sector check. This will provide a consistent approach right across the province for all police services.

Second, it strictly limits the disclosure of non-conviction records and prohibits the disclosure of non-criminal records such as mental health information. This will ensure that, if passed, this legislation will prohibit any information gathered in a police street check from being released. We're also establishing a special test to ensure that those most in need of protection—children and seniors in particular—will continue to be protected by making sure all relevant information is contained in the vulnerable sector check.

Record checks are a snapshot in time. They do not always reflect who the person is today and should only be one tool used by employers, not-for-profits and other organizations. As such, we will be working with partners to explain the role of police record checks and the practices that supplement them to protect individual liberties and keep our communities safe.

Third, an important purpose of this legislation is that police record checks will now be sent to the individual for review first, rather than directly to the employer or organization, as is typically the current practice.

Fourth, an individual would be able to request reconsideration of non-conviction and non-criminal information contained in their record check.

This legislation is the result of a broad collaboration with our partners and stakeholders who have provided valuable input to help us develop a fair and effective framework. This framework is based upon the 2014 Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police Law Enforcement and Records (Managers) Network, known as the LEARN guidelines. I would like to acknowledge the

efforts of the LEARN committee, who have worked to develop this guideline and are holding their annual conference in beautiful Port Elgin today. Unfortunately, for reasons of this legislation, I will not be able to join them there today.

The LEARN guideline sets out standards and best practices for police services who conduct police record checks. I'm pleased by the fact that over 70% of police services across the province have already adopted these guidelines, and, if passed, this legislation will make it 100%. The LEARN guideline was developed in consultation with and has been endorsed by key partners from policing, civil liberties, business, non-profit, mental health and community organizations. I want to acknowledge all the people and groups who joined me back in June for this important announcement:

—Niagara police Chief Jeffrey McGuire, president of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police;

—Ruth Goba, the interim chief commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission;

—Noa Mendelsohn Aviv, director of the Equality Program from the Canadian Civil Liberties Association;

—Camille Quenneville, the CEO of Canadian Mental Health Association;

—Jacqueline Tasca from the John Howard Society;

—OPP Superintendent Brian Smith, commander of the Security Bureau;

—Sylvia Maracle, the executive director of the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres;

—Bruce Chapman, the president of the Police Association of Ontario; and

—Cathy Taylor, the executive director of the Ontario Nonprofit Network.

In addition, I want to thank the Ontario Chamber of Commerce for their support in the work that has been done in the creation of the LEARN guideline and in this legislation, Bill 113.

This legislation will make Ontario a leader in Canada by having comprehensive legislation mandating standards for all levels of police record checks. For Ontarians, it means that their civil liberties will be protected by limiting the disclosure of information, while also ensuring public safety is not compromised.

I'm pleased to share with the House some of the comments that we have heard from these same organizations in the media upon presentation of the Police Record Checks Reform Act, for first reading. In a joint statement to the media, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the John Howard Society of Ontario, the Ontario Nonprofit Network and the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police describe the proposed legislation as follows: "Good news for Ontario workers, volunteers, students, non-profits and businesses that will now see more consistent information released in police record checks." The statement goes on to say that the aforementioned organizations "are united in their support of [the] proposed provincial legislation."

The John Howard Society at that time stated: "Today's legislation is so important. Thousands of Ontarians have

non-conviction records and don't even know it. We applaud and wholeheartedly support the government's initiative."

These quotes are a welcome endorsement of the legislation that the government is proposing in the Police Record Checks Reform Act of 2015. They speak to our collaborative approach in developing the proposal and the thoroughness of the engagement with the organization stakeholders involved. This is a very good example of how groups can be empowered to help shape legislation to address an important and complex issue.

In the words of the John Howard Society, this proposed legislation "is the culmination of years of research, collaboration, advocacy and leadership among policing, community-based and governmental parties." I wholeheartedly agree with that sentiment provided.

The amount of work that went on in collaboration, with policing partners and our civil liberties and community groups working together and coming up with this proposal along with the government was absolutely unique, in my view, and is a model, I think, that we should try to replicate as much as possible.

I also want to thank, Speaker, the work that the opposition parties have done on this issue and how we worked collaboratively to be able to come up with a proposal that will ensure that we are protecting our communities while also ensuring that civil liberties are protected at the same time. I urge all members of the House to support this legislation wholeheartedly, and I look forward to now hearing from my parliamentary assistant, the member from Scarborough–Rouge River, about the importance of this proposed legislation and some of the specifics that are contained within the legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services for his contribution to the debate, and I continue with debate from the government side. I recognize the member from Scarborough–Rouge River.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and let me say it's my honour to continue second reading debate on the Police Record Checks Reform Act, 2015. I want to echo the words of my colleague the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services and urge all members of the Legislature to support this proposed legislation.

If passed, this legislation would give Ontario a comprehensive provincial legislative framework governing how police record checks are conducted in the province. All people and groups involved in the process of conducting police record checks in Ontario, unless otherwise exempted, would be required to abide by the provisions of this legislation. This includes the Ontario Provincial Police and municipal police services, government-authorized entities responsible for conducting record searches, and third-party vendors involved in the intake of requests and disclosure of results.

Moreover, for individual Ontarians, it would mean the protection of their civil liberties and privacy by limiting the disclosure of certain non-conviction information and prohibiting the release of non-criminal information.

The legislation, if passed, will establish and standardize three types of record checks as follows: a criminal record check, a criminal record and judicial matters check, and a vulnerable sector check.

A criminal record check is the least inclusive type of record check, and includes criminal convictions and findings of guilt under the federal Youth Criminal Justice Act.

A criminal record and judicial matters check will include everything in a criminal record check plus absolute and conditional discharges, outstanding charges and warrants, and certain court orders such as probation orders and prohibition orders.

The most inclusive type of check is the vulnerable sector check, which is restricted to individuals applying for positions that involve working or volunteering with children or other vulnerable persons. In order to continue to protect the most vulnerable in our society, applicable suspended records related to certain sex offences and certain non-conviction information will still be authorized for exceptional disclosure in a vulnerable sector check. "Non-conviction information" in this context means charges that have been dismissed, withdrawn, stayed, or that resulted in a stay of proceedings or an acquittal. Information that did not result in a charge being laid is not considered non-conviction information and will not be authorized for disclosure under any type of check.

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Non-conviction information can only be released in exceptional circumstances if it meets a strict test that is set out in the bill. Police services would be required to have a reconsideration process in place so that individuals may challenge the disclosure of a non-conviction record and request its removal from their police record check results.

Mr. Speaker, on a personal note, this is a very important part to many residents in my riding. Previously, a record check would be sent to an employer or agency or whatever and the individual had no idea what was on it and had no opportunity to challenge what was on it. This change is a welcome change in my community and, I know, in many communities across Ontario. I just want to make sure that is well understood.

Police record check providers will also be required to have a process in place for individuals to pursue corrections to factual errors in their police record check results.

Information not referenced for authorized disclosure in the legislation would not be authorized for disclosure in any type of check. This includes information related to mental health, local police contact, and convictions under provincial statutes.

There would also be mandated requirements on police record check providers to ensure that individuals receive the results of the check prior to consenting to its release to a requester, such as an employer—this is new, and I think it will be a welcome change for the public. This would ensure that the individual gets an opportunity to review his or her results first.

In terms of enforcement, the Police Record Checks Reform Act, 2015, will enable the ministry to monitor and inspect police services for compliance with the act. It will establish offences and penalties for wilful contravention of its provisions, consistent with those penalties currently under privacy legislation. Individuals will continue to be able to file complaints related to their police record check with the Office of the Independent Police Review Director. A five-year review of the legislation will also be mandated.

In addition to narrow exemptions for record checks performed for certain purposes, this legislation, if adopted, will not interfere with federal requirements, nor will it apply to record checks for law enforcement purposes, including investigations, prosecution services or subsequent tribunal proceedings.

The proposed legislation has the unanimous support of a range of stakeholders, including the policing sector, civil liberties groups, the private sector, the not-for-profit sector, labour, the justice sector and the health sector. Overall, stakeholders have expressed support for the government pursuing this legislative solution to address key issues with police record checks.

Mr. Speaker, we have consulted widely, we have listened, and we have incorporated the input and advice of our multiple stakeholders into the proposed Police Record Checks Reform Act, 2015. I am honoured to support its adoption in this House and recommend to my colleagues that they do the same.

Mr. Speaker, this will be a welcome addition for many, many residents in my riding. This has been an issue for me for, I would say, well over 15 to 20 years. I was a former member of the Toronto Police Services Board, and I sat through many, many deputations from the public coming to the police services board and complaining about this unjust process that existed in the past. I think this is a welcome piece of legislation for the general public in Ontario, and they will thank us for it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): That takes us to questions and comments. I recognize the member from Huron—Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to stand and share, on behalf of the PC Party of Ontario, our support for this particular bill, Bill 113, the Police Record Checks Reform Act.

This is an important piece of legislation. We, too, on this side of the House, as opposition, support the right of all Ontarians to be treated fairly and equally. We support this legislation because it brings consistency to police record checks, based on recommendations by Ontario police chiefs, the Ontario Human Rights Commission, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and other groups.

At this time, I'd also like to give recognition to my colleague from Dufferin—Caledon. She has done great work on this file previously, and I understand that she would appreciate it if the government took a look at embedding her PMB as an amendment—as a consideration—when it reaches committee, because she makes a

very relevant point in her PMB. It is that when a volunteer wants to come forward and work for an organization—for instance, the member from Dufferin-Caledon spoke about Big Brothers Big Sisters in her statement earlier today—it costs money to have a police check. If a volunteer gets one security check done, if it's good for Big Brothers Big Sisters, it should be good for 4-H Ontario and should be good for minor hockey.

I really hope that when this particular bill gets into committee, they will give serious consideration to the member from Dufferin-Caledon—specifically to her PMB—and take a look at how volunteer checks are done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): The member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I, too, am happy to be able to do my few minutes on this bill. I certainly want to thank everybody who took the time to come to Queen's Park today to listen to second reading of this important piece of legislation.

Let's not kid ourselves: The system we have in place has failed a lot of people; it has failed a lot of people in rather dramatic ways. That a person who is about to board a ship gets stopped at the border because some of her personal information has been shared among police is not okay. That people's opportunity to get a decent job or get involved in the not-for-profit sector is basically taken away because some information about them that has no basis is being put onto the police check is not okay.

This is a good piece of work that the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton, from our party, has certainly been pushing for. But there are some issues that are still outstanding that we will talk about in more detail as to how they could be fixed. A piece of legislation like this does not come every year; it's not like an incremental work. You get it right, and then it stays that way for many, many years to come. Let's make sure, as we push it through, that we do get it right.

We have a bit of an issue with how the people who gather the data and hold the data are also given carte blanche to decide the discretionary powers they have over sharing that data, and a lot of issues with the time it takes to get police checks. Sometimes they become irrelevant because you have missed the opportunity because it takes so long to get that information back to your employer or your volunteer association.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): I recognize the member from Barrie.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I rise in support of Bill 113, because if this legislation is passed, it would develop the province's first-ever clear, consistent and comprehensive framework for how police record checks are conducted in Ontario. These changes will make Ontario a leader in Canada, with a clear, consistent and comprehensive framework to remove unnecessary barriers for success for individuals while making sure communities are safe.

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I come from an education background, as a teacher, and I know that sometimes it's hard to find people who can volunteer, especially during the day. So when they

have to go through the police records check, we want to make sure that there are certain things that do not need to be considered when they go through that record check. This procedure is already being followed by approximately 70% of the police forces across the province, from the OPP to the smallest police force. It also ensures public safety while respecting privacy.

If passed, this legislation would help remove unnecessary barriers and increase employment, volunteer and education opportunities. It does this by prohibiting the release of non-criminal information such as mental health records and strictly limiting the release of non-conviction records. We are also establishing a specific test to ensure that all necessary information is provided in vulnerable-sector checks, so those who need it most, like our children and our seniors, continue to be protected.

I urge everyone here to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): The Chair recognizes the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to add comment today on the bill that we're discussing, the Police Record Checks Reform Act. In her comments, the member from Barrie said it's time to make a framework that can actually help with police checks, to make it clear that Ontarians are treated fairly, so we don't have the release of non-criminal information such as mental health-related information. Those matters are personal and private, and they should not be disclosed.

We agree with that. I know that it has been brought up in a private member's bill from the member from Dufferin-Caledon. She brought up her bill, which was passed, and I'm hoping that it can be incorporated when the bill goes to committee—and the minister is listening, so I appreciate that. It says that “an organization that retains the services of a volunteer is prohibited from requiring a criminal record check for the volunteer, as a condition for the volunteer's starting work with the organization.... After a volunteer starts work with an organization, the organization can require a new criminal record check from the volunteer dated at yearly intervals.”

That leads to the comment made by my colleague from Huron-Bruce, who was saying that it's costly. We have a lot of volunteers out there. They have to have criminal checks before they get on certain boards, so if we can make an accommodation that if they get one check, it can be used—in this case it says “yearly,” but for some type of time period that makes sense. We need to encourage volunteers to work for 4-Hs or for any type of volunteer boards that we have in our riding—

Interjection: Baseball.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes, like baseball and hockey associations. That makes sense. So we support this bill in principle. We're hoping that the member from Dufferin-Caledon's private member's bill, which was passed in the Legislature, might be considered as an amendment to this bill.

I thank you very much for the time that I've been allowed, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): That concludes the questions and comments. A wrap-up from the Minister of Community Safety.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the members from Huron–Bruce, Nickel Belt, Barrie and Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock for their very constructive feedback and comments on the comments that were made by the member from Scarborough–Rouge River and myself.

I also want to thank them all for their support for the bill and the very important principle that is embedded in the bill, which is to ensure that there is fairness, clarity and consistent practice across the province when it comes to non-disclosure of non-criminal and non-conviction records, because too many people have been hurt in the process by information that was non-criminal and non-conviction-related in nature. Mental health comes to mind, for example; related information has been released that has been detrimental to opportunities that may have been available to them. I think it's our collective responsibility in this Legislature to ensure that we have a system in place that does not disclose that type of information.

I thank the members from Huron–Bruce and Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock for their advocacy for the bill from the honourable member from Dufferin–Caledon. I won't make a specific commitment right now because I can't, but I do make a commitment of looking into the bill more clearly and seeing if there are opportunities for us to work together and if that bill fits within this bill or not. So let's work together on that.

I want to make two important points in the 30 seconds I've got. One is, the bill contains a five-year review, because I think we need to make sure—and this goes to a point that the member from Nickel Belt was making—that we don't just create this bill and this is it, but that there be an automatic review mechanism five years from now to see how the system is working and if there needs to be improvement made, so that could be done. That's part of it.

The other aspect, which is very important, is around education. We need to make sure that we do public relations and educate folks out there, employers and volunteer organizations, that they don't need a records check all the time. I think there is too much reliance on records checks, which creates the bottleneck of taking too much time. It costs people and creates a challenge for them, so we need to work on that as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to rise today and deliver remarks on behalf of the PC caucus as critic for community safety and correctional services. I'll be sharing my time with the member from Leeds–Grenville, who will speak for the last 20 minutes of our lead.

I say it's my pleasure to debate Bill 113, the Police Record Checks Reform Act, because it's been a long time coming. The bill seeks to set a framework, for the very first time in our province's history, in regard to police record checks. Currently, there is no compre-

hensive legislative framework in Canadian jurisdictions, with the exception of British Columbia, which has a limited standard.

Under the status quo in Ontario, police departments have been left to interpret what should or should not be included in these checks themselves. This lack of clarity has been problematic for citizens of Ontario, as well as our police services, who have been calling for reform. We share the belief that the status quo must change.

Just last year in Toronto, as an example, there were 110,000 police record checks. That's an astonishing number, and it's a number that is, in fact, growing. The number of police record checks in the city has increased by a whopping 92% in just five years, so what was once a rarity has become commonplace.

Today, Ontarians routinely apply for mandatory police checks for such things as job applications, volunteering to coach a local sports team or looking to help vulnerable persons. With hockey season just fast approaching, you can be certain that, well, many Ontarians will be going through this process. This certainly is a timely piece of legislation. The last thing we want to see is a law-abiding Ontarian being automatically disqualified from a position or volunteer opportunity because of the mere existence of a police record.

A lack of clear framework has left police departments wondering what exactly should be included in a record. At the same time, organizations that require checks for screening purposes often do not have a clear understanding of what a police contact or non-conviction record is, with little to no guidance on how this should be factored in to their decision, if at all. For those following the debate at home, a non-conviction record is defined as charges that have been dismissed, withdrawn or stayed, or resulted in a stay of proceedings or an acquittal.

Now, with the current lack of a provincial framework, good candidates have been passed over, as many organizations in today's world will try to take the most risk-averse position possible and sometimes reject individuals over the mere existence of a record. For years, concerned groups have been calling on the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services to clear the air on this issue. They were told that they must also help employers or volunteer organizations understand what they're receiving in a police record check. This education aspect of the bill is critical. Organizations need to be able to understand what they are, in fact, receiving.

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Additionally, we must let the public know that the absence of a police record does not necessarily mean that an individual is safe. The following is a quote from the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police: "From a policing perspective, there is an understanding that a 'clean' police record is not a guarantee of safety; database information may be incomplete or out of date, many individuals who commit crimes will have no police record, and not all police information will be released on a record check (e.g., if release will compromise surveillance or an ongoing police investigation). Organizations,

however, tend to over-rely on police check results, viewing individuals who have no record as 'safe' and trustworthy, creating a false sense of security that may increase public safety threats."

Certainly there are a number of causes for concern when it comes to police record checks, as there is currently no legislative framework and they are being increasingly relied upon as a screening tool. That's why I was glad when the minister informed me some time ago that this was a priority of his ministry, and that consultations had begun with a wide variety of stakeholder groups. I'm even more pleased to stand today as we debate this groundbreaking legislation, which is so sorely needed. Critics have said it is long overdue. It has certainly been a long time coming. But the issue is one step closer to being resolved.

Ontarians have been hurt by the lack of a clear set of standards when it comes to police checks. Fixing this problem is good for Ontario. That's why I will be supporting Bill 113 at second reading. The Police Records Check Reform Act has so far been met with support from a broad range of concerned stakeholder groups and community partners, including the Canadian Mental Health Association, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association.

When it comes to matters such as police record checks, there's a tremendous need for a balance in policy. That balance is between the individual's right to privacy and the need to protect community safety. Bill 113 is a first step in achieving that balance. We look forward to hearing directly from various stakeholder groups at the committee stage to see which areas of the bill are effective and which ones need to be strengthened just a little bit more. While the bill is broadly supported as a whole, there will undoubtedly be some areas of concern that need to be addressed, and I certainly hope that the minister respects the input of concerned Ontarians who take the time to come to Queen's Park to have their say.

As a summary, Bill 113 has a few main objectives. First and foremost is establishing province-wide standards and rules when it comes to police record checks.

Next is the establishment of types of police records checks. In this bill, the government is proposing three types of checks. The checks would include the following information:

(1) Criminal record check: Criminal convictions and findings of guilt under the Youth Criminal Justice Act—that's a criminal record check.

(2) Criminal record and judicial matters check: Criminal record check plus outstanding charges, arrest warrants, certain judicial orders, absolute discharges, conditional discharges and other records as authorized by the Criminal Records Act.

(3) Vulnerable sector check: This is a criminal record and judicial matters check plus findings of not criminally responsible due to mental disorder, record suspensions or pardons related to sexually based offences, and non-conviction information related to the predation of a child

or other vulnerable person; that is to say, charges that were withdrawn, dismissed or stayed, or that resulted in acquittals.

"Vulnerable person" means a person who, because of his or her age, a disability or other circumstances, whether temporary or permanent,

"(a) is in a position of dependency on others; or

"(b) is otherwise at a greater risk than the general population of being harmed by a person in a position of authority or trust towards them."

A vulnerable sector check is performed in cases where an individual would be in an employment or volunteer position of trust or authority over children or other vulnerable persons.

The bill would also put into place rules for how police records are released. In my remarks, I will be going over some of the recent history that has led us to this debate in the Legislature today, as well as going over some of the aspects of this piece of legislation and highlighting the concerns of key stakeholders on this matter.

Ontarians are often surprised to learn that non-conviction police records are not removed from police databases automatically. One would assume that if an individual has not committed a crime or if they were cleared of any wrongdoing, their record would be wiped clean.

A recent John Howard Society of Ontario report on police record checks stated, "In some areas of Ontario, non-conviction records, including mental health apprehensions, unproven allegations that never resulted in charges, and criminal charges that have been withdrawn, dismissed, stayed or acquitted are regularly released on record checks."

In most cases, people are not aware that they have a non-conviction police record until it's too late. For example, one may find out when they are rejected for an employment opportunity or turned away at the American border. You can only imagine the shock of being rejected on the basis of your police record if you have never been convicted of a crime. This is an issue that is of concern to a great number of Ontarians, and there is often no way to know if you have a record until one day you find out through such a rejection.

A recent report by the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the CCLA, puts the number of Canadians with a police record as high as one in three. Let's let that sink in for a moment. I will highlight later in my remarks many individuals who have police records despite the fact that they have never been in any trouble with the law and have certainly not been charged or convicted.

In our great province alone, the CCLA estimates that as many as four million Ontarians have some form of non-conviction record. To put it lightly, a large number of citizens will be positively impacted by this legislation—one in four. We have 107 members in this Legislature, so do the math. There are probably 26 of us who may not be aware.

Police record checks are being required by an ever-growing number of Ontario employers and organizations

for the purposes of screening employees, volunteers or students applying for higher education. In today's world, these entities are under increasing pressure to minimize the potential risk and liability. This underscores the need for a clear framework around record checks.

The Centre of Research, Policy, and Program Development at the John Howard Society of Ontario recently surveyed Ontario employers in two counties, and they found that "over half of the employers require police record checks of prospective employees, and 15% of those organizations that asked for record checks have a zero-tolerance policy and simply exclude all applicants with records from employment."

Given that Ontario is facing an unemployment crisis, this is incredibly concerning. We want to ensure that employers are not passing over qualified candidates who have done nothing wrong but are falsely rejected due to the current lack of a framework on record checks.

If your record is not clean, it can have disastrous effects on your employment prospects, your ability to volunteer, attain higher education or even find a place to live. This is why one of the main goals of the bill is to severely restrict the release of non-conviction records on police background checks.

Under Bill 113, the vast majority of police record checks would be forbidden from releasing any non-conviction information. The release of this information would only be permitted as part of a vulnerable sector check. Police services would be required to perform an assessment based on criteria set out by the province to determine whether information should be disclosed.

Non-conviction information would not be disclosed except in the following circumstances: first, if the information relates to an offence authorized for disclosure under the act where the victim was a child or other vulnerable person; or second, if there are reasonable grounds to believe that the individual has engaged in a pattern of predation that presents a risk of harm to a child or other vulnerable person.

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There have been some critics who believe that there should be no circumstances where non-conviction records are ever released. I know that the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton initially felt that the bill would be putting too much power in the hands of police as they would still have some limited authority to decide what gets released and what doesn't. However, I feel that there are certainly cases where the limited release of non-conviction records is in fact needed.

Under Bill 113, in purely exceptional circumstances limited strictly to vulnerable sector checks, police services would have the ability to disclose certain non-conviction records. Again, a non-conviction record would not be disclosed under the first two types of police record checks. It could only be disclosed as part of a vulnerable sector check if it meets the following criteria:

The record relates to an offence that involved predation of a vulnerable person, and

Consideration of the following factors provides reasonable grounds to believe that the individual has engaged in a pattern of predation and presents a risk of harm to a vulnerable person. These include:

—whether the individual appears to have targeted a vulnerable person;

—whether the individual's behaviour was repeated and directed to more than one vulnerable person;

—when the incident or incidents of behaviour took place;

—the number of incidents; the reason for the incident, incidents or behaviour did not lead to a conviction; and

—other factors that may be prescribed in regulation.

I imagine that the last line, "other factors that may be prescribed in regulation," would be cause for concern for some civil liberty advocates.

Additionally, the list of relevant offences would be specified in regulations, so there is the potential for changes, good or bad, to be made in the regulatory phase. We will closely monitor any regulations passed to ensure that the balance between protecting public safety and protecting individual rights is in fact maintained.

As a whole, I support this exceptional disclosure test. It means that police services will be able to do their jobs and keep the most vulnerable members of our society safe while ensuring non-conviction records are only disclosed in the most extreme cases, with a clear set of requirements in place.

The Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police correctly noted that there is an increasing risk and liability associated with the release of non-conviction information specifically, and the establishment of proper testing criteria will decrease this risk. If the province can manage to get it right, I think that this is a win-win. The test is consistent with the LEARN Guideline for Police Record Checks, which was created after extensive consultation.

Mr. Speaker, the following groups were in fact consulted by the Ontario Association of Police Chiefs to create the guideline. They include the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the Canadian Mental Health Association Ontario, the John Howard Society of Ontario, Justice for Children and Youth, Legal Aid Ontario, the Mental Health Legal Committee, the Ontario Association of Patient Councils, the Ontario Human Rights Commission, the Police Records Check Coalition, the Psychiatric Patient Advocate Office, the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario, the University of Toronto and Volunteer Toronto, just to name a few.

This is an incredible list of community and government partners who all came together to help systemize the record check process while addressing significant concerns, all while striving to find the right balance between public safety and privacy.

The only problem with the LEARN record check guideline was that it was ultimately a suggestion for police departments. With the absence of any provincial legislation, it was the next best thing that our police services could do to establish continuity. But Bill 113

will help address a serious issue that has caused undue hardships for a shocking number of Ontarians.

Over the last few years, we have learned some of the personal stories of individuals who were shocked to learn that they had a police record despite never getting in trouble with the law. Many of these cases highlight the limitations of criminal record checks, which groups like the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police have been bringing to the public's attention for years. For their part, they recommended that the police services take a presumption against the disclosure of non-conviction records while they simultaneously educated the public.

But at the end of the day, the lack of a provincial framework and education to a public that is increasingly relying on police record checks meant that non-conviction records were often included in reports, and organizations misinterpreted this as someone having a non-clean record.

I'd like to now share some of those stories. Chris was over the moon when he learned that he had earned a part-time spot firefighting in his hometown of Caledon. After months of training on weekends, he was asked to provide a vulnerable sector police check. While the check stated that he had no charges or convictions, a letter was attached that said he had been named in a drug investigation. But Chris had never been questioned by the police so he never considered that he might have a mark on his police record. It just so happened that one of his friends had been convicted of drug charges and he had been out socially with this friend a couple of times while he was investigated. I quote: "For me to be investigated, I understand, but to go on my record when I was hanging out with a group of people? My friend sold drugs. He's an idiot. But I shouldn't get penalized for what he did." Chris said this in a Toronto Star interview. Not long after, he received a letter from the town which stated that he was terminated from the fire service due to a non-clean background check. Now, if this legislation is not passed, Chris will no longer be able to pursue a career in firefighting anywhere in the country.

In 2011, 27-year-old Ali applied for airport security clearance while he was already employed in the airline industry. It was then he learned that he had a police record which would put his career on hold. Ali was forced to quit his job with Air Canada because he could not obtain airport security clearance. He has since left Ontario to work in the Alberta oil patch. He has never faced charges or convictions and he has never been questioned by police. In Ali's case, his record was tainted simply because of where he grew up.

Growing up in social housing in Ottawa, some of his friends got caught up in drug activity. Now I quote him. He said this: "I grew up with these people since I was nine years old. I don't know who's doing what. I've lived my life, paid my taxes...." However, he was mentioned as part of a drug investigation. We certainly understand why police may have looked at those who associate with drug dealers. That's just part of an investigation. But people like Ali, who were shown to be innocent of any wrong-

doing, should not suffer because they grew up with people that committed a crime.

At some point in everyone's life, I'm sure we will come in contact with someone who committed a crime, whether it's a childhood friend or someone from a school you attended, to a neighbour. Clearly, this should not be something that gets in the way of employment or travel to other countries.

While Ali was able to find work outside Ontario, he still has difficulty crossing the border into the United States.

In 2010, Lois Kamenitz was stopped by US custom officials at Pearson International Airport. They prevented her from boarding a flight to Los Angeles because she had made a suicide attempt four years earlier. She was quoted in a CBC News article in 2011, saying, "I couldn't figure out what he meant. And then it dawned on me that he was referring to a 911 call my partner made when I attempted suicide." Lois went on to say, "I've been battling not only anxiety and depression but also chronic pain since my teen years.... I am not a criminal."

After years of struggle and hard work to recover with help from therapists and doctors from St. Michael's Hospital and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health here in Toronto, Lois was deeply hurt by the notion that she was unsafe and that records she thought were private were disclosed to a foreign government agency. "It was discrediting all the efforts that I made to recover," she said.

1630

Speaker, Bill 113 would strictly prohibit the release of non-criminal information such as a suicide attempt. This case would not have occurred if the province had acted sooner.

Catherine was studying nursing at an Ontario university a few years ago, was on the dean's list and was excelling on the road to her profession. As part of her program, she underwent police record checks annually, all without any issues. In 2012, a change in the local police department's disclosure policy meant that two incidents dating back to 2009 were now included on her record which involved alleged "violent and aggressive" behaviour. It stemmed from a mental health issue that came at a tough time when she had said she just wanted to end her life.

The family hardly described these incidents as violent or aggressive. Catherine's mother commented on the tragic effects that the patchwork of policies has had. She said, "It depends on where you are. You just don't know if something is going to come up. You just don't know if you should call 911 because it could end up on their police check." The family was angered, because if the check was performed in a different city, these mental health issues would not have been included in the report.

Bill 113 would ensure that these sorts of private, personal health matters would not be included in police record checks.

Many people with mental health problems and mental illnesses often experience stigma, negative attitudes, and

the negative behaviours they produce. Stigma spreads fear and misinformation, labels individuals and perpetuates stereotypes. More than 60% of people with mental health problems and mental illness won't seek the help they need. Stigma is one of the main reasons.

One of the most damaging myths regarding mental health is that people with mental illness are typically violent. In most cases, this is false. The Mental Health Commission of Canada believes that the practice of making non-criminal information related to a person's mental health available during checks of police records is discriminatory and stigmatizing. In 2011, the commission commented on the issue and noted that there is no national framework for the matter: "No national policy exists for police related to including mental health information in checks of police records. Historically, disclosure has not been the result of an active decision or policy to include it but rather a failure to have policy that excludes it."

The commission strongly opposes the revealing of non-criminal information regarding individuals' mental health. They state this: "[We] would argue that assumptions about the relevance of mental health information are not likely valid and that there is no compelling reason for this type of information to appear on a police record check. Ultimately, disclosure of this information can negatively influence a person's ability to find a job or volunteer for a position."

As I have mentioned in my remarks, one of the main areas of concern when it comes to police record checks is the damage that can be caused to an individual if they have a record that is not clean. If passed, Bill 113 would establish a reconsideration process for these types of cases. An individual would be able to request a reconsideration of the inclusion of information if they believe that unjustified non-conviction information is included in the record check's results. Police services would be required to have a reconsideration process in place in accordance to regulations. That would mean that in cases where police services and individuals agree—as it stands today, individuals often have nowhere to go to have their concerns addressed. This process will assist the Ontarians who have been hit hardest on this issue, and, if properly implemented, it is a positive.

It's my hope the government continues to work cooperatively with policing leaders and departments to determine a process that is effective for all parties and can resolve issues as quickly and as fairly as possible. A continued dialogue between police and the ministry will be critical.

Police representatives around the world and around the province have noted that administering the records check system is taking up a significant amount of policing resources. This is hardly surprising as more and more police department services are being used up in areas other than front-line police work.

From a budgeting perspective, both in terms of dollars and people power, we hope that any additional responsibilities undertaken by our province's police depart-

ments do not detract from community safety. Perhaps the minister can clarify whether departments will receive a clear framework from the province or if they will simply be required to establish some sort of process. That has the potential to lead to another patchwork and policies with variance from community to community throughout Ontario.

Policing leaders in Ontario have been at the forefront of discussions regarding police record check reform, and I'm sure that they will in fact offer their valuable insight and expertise throughout this process. I hope that the reconsideration process that is eventually established can balance the need of individuals to have an accurate record that does not unnecessarily hinder their employment or volunteering efforts with the need for police departments to fulfill their increasing number of responsibilities and duties.

I'd like to shift gears for a moment now and just highlight some of the issues regarding mental health in this province and the corresponding effects on police services. In many of the cases where individuals had encounters with police for mental health issues and this non-conviction information was then later released, contact with police occurs before they are seen by mental health professionals. The lack of an effective mental health care system is putting an increased strain on our province's police services.

London police estimate that they handled over 2,000 mental health calls in 2014. These calls could be better dealt with by the medical community.

This problem stems back to decisions made by governments of different political stripes going back to the 1960s, but it's gotten much worse under our current government. The London police chief, Brad Duncan, said, "In the past 10 or 12 years, we've seen a real increase in the number of individuals that we're dealing with on a regular basis."

The average wait time for funded counselling and treatment is nearly two months, so people are forced to call 911 instead. Since I was first elected in 2011, I've heard this question a lot, and I think it's a very pertinent question: Why does Ontario force those experiencing mental health issues to call the police instead of getting medical help? That's the reality we face here in Ontario. The government's status quo approach to mental health is an ineffective use of public dollars and an unfair burden to place on emergency responders.

The cost of policing is, in fact, skyrocketing. Members throughout all three sides in the House know that. It's skyrocketing, and this is the big reason why. London Police Service estimates that mental health calls account for roughly 15% of its budget.

But worst of all is the human cost. The status quo is a tragic disservice to Ontarians suffering from mental health issues.

Police officers acknowledge that they are not best suited to handle these issues, but they're left picking up the slack for the government's total failure on the file on that issue. Many of the issues regarding police record

checks stem from a lack of adequate resources being placed into our mental health care system, with spillover effects onto our province's police services.

What is truly tragic is that the government has sat on reports on the file for over a decade with few tangible results or improvements. Yes, the government has committed to some more funding, but if you were to have a conversation with those who deal with this issue on the front lines, you're not going to get the same rosy picture that the government press releases tend to paint.

1640

In 2010, an all-party committee of the Legislature came together with the goal of improving mental health. Unfortunately, it's a shame—because I know that we have members in each party in the Legislature who have a genuine commitment to improving mental health, and we have a list of recommendations that all parties agreed on. Under the Chair, the member for Oakville, and the Vice-Chair, former MPP Christine Elliott, the committee heard 230 presenters and received 300 submissions in meetings around the province over an 18-month period, yet here we are today with little, if any, of the select committee's well-thought-out recommendations actually acted upon. Sadly, it's not the first time that this government has sat on such a report.

The Liberals took power back in 2003. At that time, they inherited a report on mental illness reform called *The Time Is Now*. It was comprised of 10 regional reports and a consolidation report. In fact, when the recent Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions was having hearings, Sarah Cannon, the executive director of Parents for Children's Mental Health, commented that it had been nine years since the report was published and "we would like to see action and a plan." It was the fifth report in the past 20 years that called for an accessible, community-focused mental health care system.

Given the vacuum left by the government, individual communities have stepped up. We have a great success story in Chatham-Kent, and that's the HELP Team. The HELP Team consists of police officers and support staff who receive extra training to deal with the mentally ill and who are partnered with local mental health agencies and support groups. The officers work regular patrol duties but are available to handle calls for service involving the mentally ill. Consumers, family members and mental health professionals indicated, through a survey with the Canadian Mental Health Association and the Chatham-Kent Health Alliance, that the service to the mentally ill has been significantly enhanced.

As the government fails to take action, it is placing an increasing burden on Ontarians left to struggle to find mental health services, while our police services try to keep up with an increasing number of mental health-related calls. Our police officers, such as the HELP Team in Chatham-Kent, do a fantastic job, and they're glad to help members of their community in their greatest time of need, but every time someone is forced to call the police because they couldn't get proper mental health

support, it's a failure by the government to do the right thing by the people of this province.

Despite these criticisms, as I wrap up my remarks, I just want to reiterate my support for Bill 113. It is critical that we establish a framework for police record checks and replace a patchwork of policies put in place without any direction whatsoever being given by the province. It answers years of calls from police services and human rights groups to address this oversight. It will increase public confidence in our province's police services. It will, in fact, make it easier for police officers to do their jobs, as they will no longer be left to independently decide what should or should not be included in record checks. Most importantly, it will reassure the public that they will not be falsely rejected from employment or job opportunities because of non-criminal information, nor will their private mental health information be disclosed, unless it is of a criminal nature.

This bill is good for Ontario, and that's why I will be supporting Bill 113 at second reading.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I will now give the remainder of my time to our member from Leeds–Grenville.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to recognize the member for Leeds–Grenville and deputy leader of the official opposition.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you very much, Speaker, and thanks for the kind words, as well. I want to thank my colleague the member for Chatham–Kent–Essex and our critic for community safety and corrections for the opportunity to share in the lead this afternoon.

But before I get into my comments on Bill 113, I want to echo the remarks that I made at the annual police officers' memorial run when it stopped in Brockville on Friday. The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services was with the runners when they arrived, and as I said during the ceremony, he deserves a lot of credit for taking part in the run. Supporting those who put their lives on the line every day to keep us safe is definitely something all MPPs in this Legislature can agree on. I want to, again, extend kudos to Minister Naqvi for what he did.

Knowing police officers like I do, I'm sure the minister heard plenty of advice when he was out there on his trek, and I truly hope he was listening to what the officers had to say. We need to see some of that insight the minister received from the front-line officers reflected in future legislation that he'll be bringing forward over the course of this session.

That's actually a good lead-in to this bill that we're debating this afternoon. We've heard during the government's lead and from the comments by our outstanding PC critic that Bill 113, the Police Record Checks Reform Act, 2015, has the support of the police and community. In particular, the Association of Chiefs of Police have expressed the need for reform, and in fact, they actually began working on this initiative—if you go back—in 2007. I would be remiss at this point if I didn't mention the two municipal chiefs of police from my riding who are members of OACP. That would be Chief Garry Hull

in Gananoque and Chief Scott Fraser from the city of Brockville.

As we know, the real momentum for these reforms are the numerous headlines about people whose lives were turned upside down by information released through police background checks. In the connected world we live in today, so much about us is captured and preserved some somewhere, whether it's on a computer database, the magnetic strip on a swipe card, or in our social media history. I know that some former candidates in the current federal campaign have learned a very public and painful lesson about that last area that I mentioned.

Ultimately, we have control over what we say on social media and the image that portrays about who we are to our friends, our family, our employers and the general public. But unfortunately, we don't have as much control as we should over the aspects of our personal information. On almost a daily basis, we hear stories about personal information getting into the wrong hands because some government agency, organization, or business failed to put the proper protocols and security in place; or in many cases, where they are in place, these measures prove to be flawed or out of date because of rapidly advancing technology—all of which leads us to the situation in Ontario today when it comes to police record checks.

We have clearly reached the point where we need to put some legislated standards in place. I think most people will agree in this chamber that these checks can be an essential tool for employers and agencies that have the responsibility to protect vulnerable people. I think that if you surveyed the members, we'd all agree with that. But at the same time, given the sensitive nature of this information, it's essential to establish a system that clearly sets out what information about us can be released. When we don't have that, it leads to some of the horror stories that we've already heard this afternoon.

No one should have details released about an interaction with police if they called for assistance for a mental health crisis. People suffering with mental illness face enough problems with stigma in our society already than to have this added to the mix. If such information showed up on a police background check required by a prospective employer, unfortunately we know it could harm a person's chances of landing that job. It's wrong—actually, it's illegal—but we know that it's happening today in Ontario.

It's not just potential employment that can be affected. The problems created when unnecessary information about an interaction with police is released extend to finding a place to live, volunteering to help a community organization and, as mentioned earlier, travelling across the border. There's more as well.

The potential to harm a person's reputation is perhaps even greater when we look at some of the non-conviction data that's been released in the past. It's been mentioned before in this debate this afternoon.

1650

The John Howard Society has done some very interesting research on this. I know it's been quoted. I'll quote

it again: Between 2010 and 2011 in our province, 43% of adult criminal court cases resulted in charges being withdrawn or stayed. That's a lot of Ontarians who have no criminal record but who might be surprised to learn that this non-conviction information is being disclosed as part of a police record check.

As the John Howard Society's work shows, an increasing number of employers are relying on criminal background checks in the hiring process. I know it's been mentioned again, but in two counties in our province, they found that more than half of employers are now requiring a check for every new hire that they have. The study also found that 15% of those organizations that do check the background of potential employees have a zero tolerance policy. Now I could say something here about the standards in the Premier's office these days, but I don't want the members across to jump up on their feet so early in my speech.

If that non-conviction record is uncovered, you're not getting the job. You have no opportunity to explain what happened, period. It's done. Indeed, it's rather an ironic situation given that the hallmark of our justice system is the presumption of innocence. But that hasn't been the case when it comes to employers acting on information uncovered in a police background check.

The other point worth making here is that a person denied employment due to a mental health matter on a record check has protection under the law. That's because the Ontario's Human Rights Code makes it illegal for an employer to discriminate on the basis of a disability, including mental illness. However, there is no such human rights protection for those with non-conviction records. Again, Speaker, it's critical to remember that we're talking about something that affects thousands of Ontarians who have non-conviction information associated with them.

I certainly want to take the opportunity to commend the work of the police chiefs' association, who, I mentioned, recognized that this was a problem as far back as 2007. Little action has been taken on those guidelines since then. The so-called LEARN guideline was developed last year and has been implemented by so many police forces, to their credit. It's unfortunate that in our society people are quick to condemn the police but too slow to give them credit for their good work. I want to applaud them for this initiative today.

Applause.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you. That's very good.

Even with the efforts of the police chiefs, though, LEARN is only a guideline. It's only a guideline. The reality is that we still have a patchwork of policies and procedures in place across the province today. And that, as I'm sure you'll have from the debate we've already had this afternoon and the debate that will follow, is the problem that Bill 113 attempts to rectify.

There are many questions we need to address in the course of the debate on this bill. The first and most obvious is whether this legislation gets it right when it comes to the delicate balance between protecting public safety and respecting the privacy of individuals.

We also need to look closely at the issue of whether the legislation will continue to allow the police to do their work. To keep us safe, police have to be able to share even sensitive personal information with other forces and agencies, including the courts and including border services. We all want Ontario to have the best set of practices in place when it comes to respecting our individual privacy rights. However, we can't allow those regulations to go too far to hamper the work of those working every day to keep us safe.

As our critic has indicated, in general, we like what we see outlined in the legislation. It's a bill that we're prepared to support so that we can get it into committee and bring some other experts and community groups into the discussion. Certainly I'm mindful of the need to get these legislated standards around police checks in place. That said, Speaker, no legislation is perfect, which is why even when we have a general consensus between parties, and on a particular piece of legislation, debate is important. We saw again, this morning, this government closed down debate on very important legislation. I hope the government also recognizes that and is going to allow us to have a full debate on Bill 113.

I don't want to spend a lot of time this afternoon going over the details. I think other members today have already done that. Certainly, that information has been covered.

To review quickly, the bill is designed to clear up the problem with that patchwork of policies I mentioned earlier that are in place now, by setting up a process that will govern all providers of police record checks in Ontario. It establishes three types of police record checks: a criminal record check, a criminal record and judicial matters check, and a vulnerable sector check. It specifies what information is and is not authorized for disclosure by police under each category.

It also requires that a person have the opportunity to review what's contained in the background check before it's disclosed to a third party. That's a very important component of the legislation. Frankly, it's pretty shocking that it hasn't been the case up till now.

As we heard, Speaker, there are circumstances when non-conviction information can be released under the vulnerable sector check. We recognize the need for this to be maintained in the interest of ensuring the safety of those vulnerable individuals in our society.

The bill also gives a person the opportunity to file for a reconsideration of that decision, but I note it's left up to the individual police services to establish that review process.

Reconsideration, Speaker, falls under section 10 of Bill 113. If you'll indulge me, section 10(4) states: "If the individual submits a request for reconsideration in accordance with the regulations, the provider shall, within 30 days after receiving the reconsideration request, reconsider its determination in accordance with any requirements prescribed by the minister."

The same is true when it comes to an individual's ability to have the results of a background check corrected before it's released to a third party.

If you look further into the bill, section 15(1) deals with these corrections and states: "Every police record check provider shall create and implement a process to respond to a request from an individual to correct information in respect of the individual if the individual believes there is an error or omission in the information."

It goes on to say, Speaker, in section 15(2), "The process shall comply with any requirements the minister may prescribe."

I'd like to know whether the minister has any plans to set some guidelines around both of these review processes to ensure consistency across the province. As I said, it's an important component of the legislation, so we need to ensure that every Ontarian has access to a proper review process.

I appreciate that the bill also empowers the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services to monitor and inspect police services for compliance. But I'm going to suggest it's better to establish a clear process for all forces to follow first, rather than leave it up to a ministry review at some point in the future to identify a problem.

The other unknown here is the commitment by the minister to accompany the legislation with a public education campaign. We've heard that the purpose of this effort is to raise awareness among businesses, organizations and the general public about Bill 113, as well as provide information about best practices. These best practices are supposed to include when it's appropriate to ask for a police record check, so I sincerely hope that there's a big focus on the public awareness initiative that's being planned by the ministry. I really hope that during this debate someone in the ministry, either the minister or the parliamentary assistant, talks about that public awareness campaign. We live in an increasingly risk-averse society, one of the consequences of which is that police record checks are becoming standard practice by more and more organizations and employers.

Certainly, if the minister's public awareness campaign is to include bringing some seminars to different parts of the province—and I think it's a good idea to have some seminars across Ontario—I would welcome one such orientation session in Leeds–Grenville. So I'm making the offer to host one in my riding.

One of the other reasons I'm pleased to have the chance to speak to Bill 113 so early during second reading debate is that this is a subject I hear about fairly regularly from my constituents. On both sides of the criminal record check process, I've had concern expressed to me. People having a check done or the organization requesting it have told me they're frustrated with the cost of these checks and the time it can take to complete them. I appreciate that neither of these issues is directly addressed in the legislation we're debating today, and I am aware that the Ontario Nonprofit Network will be coming forward, when we get this bill into committee, to bring forward some recommendations on behalf of its members. Certainly, I'm looking forward to hearing what they have to say and how we, as legislators, can make life easier for these critical organizations in all of our communities.

1700

But I want to assure the minister of something this afternoon: He doesn't have to go searching for a way to use Bill 113 as an opportunity to address the issue of record check costs to volunteers or groups they want to help out. My caucus colleague, my fellow Ontario PC deputy leader, the member for Dufferin-Caledon, Sylvia Jones, has already done the work for the minister. She has tabled a bill that would make a great amendment to Bill 113. It's Bill 79, the Helping Volunteers Give Back Act, 2015. It's a really straightforward piece of legislation. It's a bill that I believe will go a long way to opening the door to more volunteers to get involved. As we all know very well from the many events that we all attend in our ridings, volunteers truly are the heart of our communities. In all 107 ridings, volunteers make the difference in every riding in the province.

Ms. Jones's Bill 79 would establish that a volunteer could pay for one criminal record check per year and would allow them to use it for multiple organizations in which they want to get involved. This would remove the situation now where individuals must pay for numerous checks to help out at their child's school, their sports teams or many, many community organizations. We all know that many volunteers are involved in more than one thing in our community. Anyone who attends the Ontario Volunteer Service Awards can see multiple volunteers for many, many organizations.

Where organizations are now covering the cost of record checks, as we encourage some of them to do to get more volunteers—that means there's going to be more and more money spent on that instead of programs. So I think it's very important that it's something that the minister can use at his disposal and can incorporate as an amendment. I hope, during the debate, that someone on the government side would actually express support for this amendment. I know Ms. Jones has worked very hard on Bill 79. It's an issue that I've heard numerous times in my riding, as I said earlier, from both sides, from groups and from volunteers, and to me it would signal to the government that they want to put—I think the words in the throne speech were “partnership over partisanship.” This bill is not a partisan bill. It's a bill that will show and signal to the government that they are serious about this and they want to make it work in the riding.

I know that the minister does value volunteers in the agencies and activities that are in the province, so I really hope to hear him say that very soon. Maybe even this afternoon, under the questions and comments section, someone from the government will say that.

It has been a privilege for me to have the opportunity to share the lead with our exemplary critic for community safety and corrections, Mr. Nicholls. I'm even more pleased that what we see in this bill builds upon the good work of our police community and the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police. It's clear that many of the stakeholders are in general agreement that this bill gets the balance right between protecting our privacy and protecting our safety.

As I've outlined, there are some questions about the regulations. I also think we have a chance to make it better with some amendments in committee. Obviously, I'm partial to Bill 79. I think it would be a great amendment to add, but I know that there are other groups, like the Ontario Nonprofit Network, that have some ideas as well.

I think it's important that we use the opportunity we have to debate the bill, to talk more about the growing trend of using police record checks. Certainly, there are times when this information is absolutely necessary, but not every time. Let's face it: If one of the concerns we have now is the cost and the time to process these requests, continuing to increase their use will only exacerbate the problem. So I think we have to deal with this piece of legislation. We have to get it into committee and move it forward.

I would hope that the outcome of the debate is that organizations will learn that there are other effective screening methods they can use when a potential volunteer steps forward to help. I really hope that during the debate over this session, some of those suggestions will not only be talked about on the floor, but they'll actually get their way through committee.

Again I want to reiterate that I'm asking the government for a full debate on this issue, because there are so many different opinions and different voices that need to be heard. This minister is also the government House leader, so I hope they won't bring the guillotine motion down to cut off debate like they did this morning, and that we can actually have that good discussion here in the Legislature.

I'm pleased to be able to share the lead. I look forward to questions and comments from all three parties.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It's now time for questions and comments.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's a pleasure to stand in the House today and make comments on the comments made by the members from Chatham-Kent-Essex and Leeds-Grenville.

I guess I've been lucky; I've passed all of the police checks that I've undergone, and I've undergone probably more than most people. Let alone when you're coaching ball or working bingos, as a reporter in a border area, in Windsor, I used to cover a lot of stories in Detroit: the Presidents, the Vice-Presidents, Pope John Paul II. I remember covering Ronald Reagan's Republican nomination convention in 1980, and the Pope there in 1987, but other Presidents who came through, such as Jimmy Carter, or Senators like Teddy Kennedy and all those guys. We used to have to put in our credentials to have them checked by the FBI, the Secret Service or whatever, and if I got a chance to go to Washington to do a story, again, it goes through the same thing if you're going through the White House or Congress or whatever.

So I've been cleared, up until now. Some people may check my sanity after coming up here to Queen's Park; I don't know. But I've been one of the lucky ones. Other friends have told me about being turned away at the

border on their way to a holiday because they had been asked the question, “Have you ever been charged with anything?” Even though you were never successfully prosecuted—the charges could have been dropped—if you give an honest answer, if the border guard is having a bad hair day or a bad day, he can turn you around. There goes your vacation; there goes your deposit.

So once we get this kind of thing straightened out, I think it will be good for everybody. I think we can all work together and improve it a bit, but I think that at the end of the day this is long overdue, and I certainly hope we all support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I’m pleased to add a few comments to what my friends from Chatham–Kent and Leeds–Grenville presented from the opposition. It’s great to hear that they support the legislation and that the government is going in the right direction. I think they both actually expressed the concerns of the public very clearly, and why this particular piece of legislation is needed.

The most important thing on this piece of legislation: Currently, police services across the province issue these record checks, and there is no standardization. So depending on which community you live in, you may be subject to a record check that is inappropriate. You may have lost employment or you may have lost a volunteer position or whatever in one community, but if you go to another community there’s a good chance you’ll get one. This legislation actually standardizes that record check and the three types of record check that can be done.

I fully believe also that when this gets implemented, some of the record checks that are being requested today by employers and other agencies and organizations—as soon as they realize the rules and regulations behind these checks, a significant number of them will not be requested anymore. I think the police services will see a reduction in the number of requests for these types of record checks as time goes on, and I think that’s a good thing.

But I just want to say that the member from Leeds–Grenville made it very clear that people are being affected in terms of jobs, in terms of finding homes, in terms of travelling, and this piece of legislation will correct that. I’m glad he’s saying that he’s willing to support it, and so is my colleague from Chatham–Kent–Essex.

1710

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I’m pleased to rise to offer my comments during the two-minute comments and questions. I admired the comments and the direction my colleagues took in the last 60 minutes. They did a great job.

First, to the member from Leeds–Grenville, I echo your concern about closing this debate off too early. Earlier today, when Bill 73 was being debated, I was

really looking forward to commenting and contributing to the debate on the Smart Growth for Our Communities Act. But unfortunately, because they closed down that debate so quickly, that opportunity was stripped away from me. It’s unfortunate, because the realities of rural Ontario are very different from urban.

That aside, we also want to ensure that people have an opportunity to exercise their voice on important issues. Bill 113 is exactly the type of bill that everyone should be able to chat about and reflect upon.

In terms of the real-life examples that the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex shared, they really drew together the importance of why this bill should be supported by all three parties. I thank him for sharing those examples, because we need to stand up for our vulnerable people every which way you look at it. When you take a look at the fact that non-conviction data can impact people in so many different ways, it’s just not fair. We all stand united in this House, I believe, in ensuring that Ontarians are treated fairly and consistently, so I applaud everyone in that regard.

Another reason we need to build consistency into this particular bill is that even in our family, a student teacher applied for one security check in Ottawa and paid a certain amount of money. Then, based on her second placement back home, the security check parameters and cost were totally different. We need consistency, and this bill will get to it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I, too, listened with quite a bit of attention, actually, to the two previous members, from Chatham–Kent–Essex and Leeds–Grenville.

I would say that the member from Leeds–Grenville really focused on the part of the bill that we will be seeking an amendment to. This is section 10, that he talked about. Basically, although we agree with what the bill wants to do, and we all know that the way it is now is not working, the bill is not an incremental process. You have to get it right. So we will need to have modification done to section 10.

When the minister was there, he said in his remarks, “We will review the bill in five years to see if it needs review.” I don’t want any part of that, Speaker. I will remind you that the local health integration network act of 2007 said that it would need to be reviewed five years later. That would have been in 2012. I asked for the review to take place in 2012, in 2013, in 2014 and in 2015, and the review that is in the law that we passed in this chamber still has not been done. So to say, “We agree that there are parts of the bill that need to be looked at, but we will do this at a future time”—no. This is why the members from Leeds–Grenville and Chatham–Kent–Essex both said they want to have an opportunity to talk about this bill.

Although we support its principles and support where it wants to go, the bill has to be done right, because the opportunities to change it are really limited, and right now, it has a few flaws.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Leeds–Grenville can now reply for two minutes.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to thank my fellow members from Windsor–Tecumseh, Scarborough–Rouge River, Huron–Bruce and Nickel Belt for their comments.

I want to just pick up briefly on what the member for Nickel Belt talked about. The 107 MPPs need to take a more active approach on some of the reviews of these bills. Too many times in committee we allow the clause to come in that the minister will review the bill after five years. I really think that we could strengthen that, that we could send it to one of our standing committees of the Legislature so that we, as members, can actually take what we've heard in our ridings and apply it when these legislative reviews take place.

I have to tell you that I'm disappointed a little bit with my good friend from Scarborough–Rouge River. He is the parliamentary assistant. I really had hoped that you would have addressed the two important points I mentioned, that being the awareness programs—and I think the ministry could really do a tremendous show of goodwill by tabling in this House, with all three parties, a schedule of public awareness about this bill, as well as Bill 79. The member for Dufferin–Caledon has a great bill that I think could be easily incorporated into this legislation.

I really would hope that at some point before debate collapses or before the guillotine from this government comes down to choke off debate, to quote a former speech from the member for St. Catharines, we actually get those two aspects addressed. I think they're critical for Bill 113 to move forward. We need to find out how the government is going to communicate these changes to the stakeholders, to businesses, to organizations, to municipalities and to police service boards. There are a number of stakeholders that need this, so I really hope those two aspects get dealt with at some point.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Oshawa.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Applause.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you to the member from Leeds–Grenville.

I think you'll find that we have unanimous consent to stand down our lead today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Oshawa is seeking unanimous consent to stand down the lead. Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Please continue. You have 20 minutes.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am pleased to be able to stand in this Legislature and share my thoughts today on Bill 113, the Police Record Checks Reform Act, 2015. I would also like to welcome to the Legislature today guests who are here in connection with this bill, who are involved and invested in our communities in terms of community safety and fair community participation. We appreciate the work that you do in our communities every day. Thank you for joining us today at Queen's Park.

This is a bill that is in response to many personal and public cases of unfair use of police non-conviction records that have had devastating effects on the lives of individuals across the province. This is also an issue that my colleague from Bramalea–Gore–Malton has worked extensively on, and we look forward to his remarks later this week.

We live in a society built on the presumption of innocence. However, we see regularly that in practice that often isn't the case. When we find examples that challenge the presumption of innocence, whether we are talking about street checks or non-conviction record disclosures, we must challenge the framework and re-establish and reaffirm our commitment to justice, privacy and freedom to equitably participate in our communities.

What are we talking about? This bill was born out of public concern for the unfair disclosure of non-conviction records. Many people have been needlessly denied opportunities in their adult lives as an unfair result of a police record check that turned up a record of something that did not result in a conviction ending up in a police check. People who have sought housing, employment, volunteer opportunities or opportunities for self-improvement have been denied them because of a negative and unfair surprise on a police record check.

A bit of background: Police record checks are routinely required in the non-profit sector. Individuals who want to volunteer or are looking for employment opportunities are routinely required to have police record checks done. These checks are done through the Canadian Police Information Centre, or CPIC, database.

When a record check is done, as it stands now, the release of information disclosed through the record checks is not limited to records of conviction. In fact, it may, and routinely does, include non-conviction records. Non-conviction—let's talk about what that means: all contact with police where a record is taken, including criminal matters before the courts that result in acquittal or where a conviction is to be expunged, or if someone is a witness to an event or even when someone may be in mental health distress resulting in police contact; records of something that does not result in a conviction or even charges—those are examples of non-conviction records. When these non-conviction records are disclosed through a routine background check, they can have injurious consequences, and that isn't right or fair.

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Mr. Speaker, just over a year ago, you may recall, the Toronto Star ran a series of articles called Presumed Guilty. They focused on individuals whose lives had been upset and unfairly affected by non-conviction records coming out on background checks. In May 2014, the Star reported:

"Hundreds of thousands of people are listed in Canada's national criminal records despite never having been convicted of a crime....

"More than 420,000 people were listed in the RCMP's Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) database as having no conviction in 2005....

"Many of them are listed in the database for mental health issues.

"For example, nearly 2,500 with no conviction registered had a notation for 'attempt suicide.' Another 2,200 had a notation for 'mental instability' with no conviction."

As I said, the Toronto Star ran a series of pieces. I actually brought a few with me today to share some of the personal stories that were featured. One example of how damaging non-conviction disclosures can be was highlighted by the Star in a piece from May 24, 2014:

"The most outrageous aspect of non-conviction disclosures is the re-victimization of the innocent, says Anne, 58....

"In 2003, she called police and fled to a woman's shelter because of domestic abuse....

"Her then husband was arrested and charged with assault and threatening death. Shortly after, he called the arresting officer and filed a complaint against Anne for allegedly threatening him."

"The officer believed my husband wanted to get back at me (and) filed the complaints out of spite,' she says. 'I was told not to worry about it.'...

"When she applied years later to be a volunteer at a women's shelter, she was shocked to discover she had a police record indicating she was 'suspected' of uttering threats.

"Anybody can pick up the phone, dial 911, file a complaint against you and if it goes into the database, you're stuck with it,' she says. 'When I discovered that I had this label for who knows how long, I just couldn't get my head around it. It boggles my mind. Who came up with this?'....

"She appealed to the officer who investigated the allegations against her and asked him to remove the information from her record.

"He stated he could not,' she says. 'I would just have to explain to future employers the circumstances and hope they would believe me.'"

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Stop the clock. I appreciate when there is conversation, but not when it's across the aisles. In respect to the speaker, the member from Oshawa, I would ask that we listen a little more attentively and not have across-the-aisle discussions. Thank you very much.

Applause.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you, Minister.

I will continue. As Anne was saying in this article from the Star: "I was told, 'There's nothing we can do, this is how government expects (police) to record every incident they are called upon,'" she says. 'The convicted are protected. But these non-conviction record releases definitely violate my constitutional rights to be heard, to defend myself against these false records.'"

Mr. Speaker, I told you I brought a couple to read. I've got another one, another example of a personal story,

from May 18, 2014. This is a piece submitted by John Pierce, who contacted the Star:

"He tried to file a complaint to police about being stalked online by a hacker.

"The officer starts telling me, 'You've got a history of violence dating back to 2002,'" Pierce recalls.

"He was referring to a decade-old record—which Pierce says he didn't know existed—of an incident in which a businessman claimed Pierce pushed him in the heat of an argument. The police showed up. Pierce says he explained the situation. There was no arrest or charge, he says....

"I was shocked to learn that I was not convicted of anything but they have it listed on police records suggesting I was charged and convicted. This needs to be addressed.'"

One more, Mr. Speaker, while I'm up, another story taken from June 22, 2014, about a trip through a security line at Pearson International Airport. A gentleman named Andrew was "directed into secondary screening for the first time in his many trips south...." He waited "90 minutes in puzzlement until a US border guard asked him if he'd ever been convicted of possessing narcotics.

"No, sir,'" he replied.

"The officer told Andrew that records showed he was investigated for possession of narcotics in 1990 and that, as a result, he was being denied entry to the US.

"Never having been convicted of a crime, Andrew didn't understand. And then he remembered a high school incident when he and some friends were nabbed in a park by police who charged them all with smoking a joint.

"We were in Oakville sitting on a bench to celebrate graduation. Some people took off and some stayed like me.... I've never hurt anyone in my life. I don't even kill spiders."

"The narcotics charge was dismissed in court. But the record was never removed from police computers.

"While his colleague was boarding the flight ... Andrew was being fingerprinted, photographed and escorted back to the terminal.

"It's not only the business I lost there, but my reputation. You can imagine how embarrassing that is. Is there no ability to use judgment? No discretion? How does a boy having fun in high school become a threat to the United States?'....

"He's also filed a nearly \$600 waiver to have his record cleared—a process he says he'll have to undergo every year to maintain his access to the US."

Mr. Speaker, these are some interesting examples and, I think, food for thought for some of us. People have no idea what a police record might include. Records are very common, and they are disclosed without discretion. There are very real concerns about the information kept in these records serving as a deterrent to seeking police help or involvement. If community members know that by interacting with police, there could be a resulting record that could mean they can't get a job, a volunteer

position or pursue a goal, how likely will it be for them to interact with police? I would wager not too likely.

Now imagine a situation of crisis or distress. When an individual is in distress or in danger, we would hope they would reach out to the appropriate authorities or emergency services, if needed. However, how much of an effect would the fear of repercussions have on someone deciding to dial 911 or not? For someone who is in crisis, if they have to stop and wonder if this is going to mean that they can't get a job, how likely are they going to be to reach out?

People who find themselves in medical distress or facing mental health challenges should not be captured under police record checks. Sometimes people need help or find themselves connecting with police when in distress or while suffering a mental health or emotional crisis. Any record of this interaction should not be accessible by prospective employers or anyone else. In fact, non-conviction records are none of anyone's business. There shouldn't be any disclosure of non-conviction records, with the only possible exception involving the most extreme cases connected to safety, to child welfare, access, or the vulnerable person sector. As we've talked about today, those are matters to be discussed further as this bill continues.

Again, I'm going to refer to the Toronto Star series on the issue and an article from June 8, 2014. This one is called "U of T Med Students Petition Cops to Stop Release of Suicide Attempt Records."

"Toronto medical students have signed a petition asking police not to automatically disclose suicide attempts as it could cause people with mental health issues to hesitate when accessing help.

"Phillip Gregoire and more than 200 of his classmates at the University of Toronto's medical school ... have all signed a petition demanding Toronto police stop automatically disclosing suicide attempt records in a national police database where the information can be shared on employment background checks and with US border authorities."

He says, "In our first year medical education we learn a lot about stigma and how it impacts the health of our patients....

"People who have attempted suicide or had a variety of other mental health issues could hesitate when accessing help because it may be a barrier for them travelling to the US or having it on their record when they apply for jobs. We don't want them to fear accessing emergency services for fear of harming their future."

Surprisingly, health records can be accessed by US border officials. From a Star article on June 6, 2014, Nadia from Toronto shared her story. She says, "I was stunned when I was stopped at the Detroit border and told to go into the office for questioning." She had called 911 during a troubled period in her life eight years before. She says, "I eventually found out I was flagged because of what they called a contact with police. I had no idea what they were talking about. Then I figured out they were looking at my 911 call. I was humiliated and

stunned that some American border guard could access my personal health information. It's obscene."

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When it comes to mental health, I think we would all agree that we must support Ontarians, not vilify and persecute. We do not accept a system of persecution without prosecution. We also want a system where Ontarians connect with the police as needed, and that they don't regret it for the rest of their lives.

There also seems not to be any real rhyme or reason when it comes to record checks and their use. Currently, there is no consistent framework on how and when a police record check can be used. Until there is legislation that takes effect and receives royal assent, there is no framework, and records releases can vary widely from police jurisdiction to police jurisdiction.

According to the Ontario Nonprofit Network, or ONN, "It was clear that inconsistent practices across Ontario about the type and detail of information contained in a police record check were creating uncertainty and challenges for non-profits.... Many non-profits were concerned about how to interpret this information with respect to privacy, human rights and community safety."

Well, Mr. Speaker, it's no wonder. If background checks are yielding non-conviction information about police interactions, from youthful indiscretions to acquittals, and from mental health distress to discriminatory carding data, how could a non-profit fairly navigate that information and then decide how best to use it?

Last December, the Ontario Nonprofit Network and partners asked for a province-wide solution, based on the OACP's voluntary Law Enforcement and Records (Managers) Network, or the LEARN record check guideline. LEARN guidelines were developed by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police.

Other groups that have organized against police non-conviction records disclosure include those who had been working for police record check reform through the Police Records Check Coalition. Groups including the Canadian Mental Health Association of Ontario, the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the John Howard Society of Ontario and the Ontario Association of Patient Councils have positioned against the disclosure of police non-conviction records.

This issue doesn't only affect those seeking employment or volunteer opportunities. Students hoping to graduate from post-secondary education who have already paid for their degree and gone through the program can find themselves then unable to graduate because they are barred from completing a placement because of a surprise non-conviction report.

Schools may have a privacy policy that prevents the school from investigating or delving into specifics when it comes to those non-conviction record disclosures. As a result, the schools don't have any room to manoeuvre. These records preclude students from participating in some placements, which means they cannot complete the program. There may be some cumbersome, costly and

fruitless measures that students can take, but ultimately it can come to the same.

Our current system persecutes individuals who were not charged, tried or convicted of anything. That isn't fair, which is why we are here discussing this bill and a fairer way forward.

Both the John Howard Society of Ontario and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association have written reports on non-conviction records. They call for tighter control and for information to be withheld, except in cases of significant threat to public safety. According to the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, one in three Canadians are thought to have some form of non-conviction record just hanging out in police computers.

While we are here, Speaker, let's talk about those computers. How much data is held, and why? How relevant is it what happens when we are kids when we are pursuing our adult goals? Now that data is digital, and it doesn't take up much physical space—as opposed to the old days with paper and physical notes—is there ever any incentive to purge or get rid of it? Digital files can't be buried by the years or yellow with the passage of time. Everything can come back to haunt us, even things we didn't do or things that we don't know about.

The police often have a reason to make a record, but what reason is there to keep it forever if it does not lead to or connect with any charge or conviction? Why should health records be filed as police records?

I believe in safe communities where people participate freely. Sometimes they make mistakes, and sometimes they are in the wrong place at the wrong time; sometimes they are the wrong age or description; and sometimes they are just living life like anyone else. We want communities to communicate with police. We would hope that when they do, any record of it isn't going to ruin their careers or their hopes. Ultimately, I am sure the police want smooth and open interactions in their communities as well.

There may be some divide within the various communities regarding records, whether street checks or background checks, but I do think that at the very basic level, policing might be an easier job if more people felt they could interact with law enforcement safely and without negative repercussions. This is an important step in that direction. We want people in need and in crisis to turn toward help and never away from it.

Mr. Speaker, we support this bill. As I said earlier, we must challenge the framework and re-establish and reaffirm our commitment to justice, privacy and freedom so that everyone is able to participate fully and fairly in our communities and in their own futures.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments? I recognize the member from Beaches—East—

Mr. Arthur Potts: York.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):—York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If I could remind you, Beaches—East York—I'm the first Liberal

since 1902. But that does not have anything to do with this conversation today.

What I do like is the opportunity to respond to the member for Oshawa on her very thoughtful comments on this bill. Of course, we appreciate very much her indication of their support for this legislation. Particularly, I appreciated her introduction to this concept of the revictimization of the innocent, because that's a very great way of describing what this bill is trying to prevent and avoid in unsolicited police checks where we can take a look at people's records and non-convictions. They shouldn't be having to suffer the kinds of indignities that she went through very carefully—the effects on their volunteer work, the effects on travel.

I was most interested that she mentioned Phillip Gregoire. He's a very close friend of my niece, Alex Tevlin, who's a U of T student. She connected with Mr. Gregoire a number of months ago, many months ago, and we've been working with him and his group of very dedicated medical volunteers who are particularly concerned about the impact that these non-disclosure incidents will have on people's access to the mental health system. I appreciate very much the work that he's done through the PA and the minister's office. I like to think that in some small measure their intervention has had a direct impact on the way this bill is currently being framed as an opportunity to go forward.

It's not just that. I've heard from lawyers and members of legal aid who have come forward with the same issue, particularly as it affects people who are travelling. You do get to that situation at the border where, quite often, just the appearance that something has happened in the past seems to be enough to get you turned away from the border so you can't go on and do your business, do your travel—things that you were planning to do in the US.

I appreciate very much that the member opposite, notwithstanding she didn't have the lead, has indicated that their party will be supporting this legislation, and I look forward to more debate on it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I found the debate very interesting this afternoon. I want to comment on the member from Oshawa's remarks as well as the other members that I've heard so far. I'm waiting to hear from the government as well.

This is an important bill. As the member from Leeds—Grenville has suggested, if we adopted Bill 79 from the member from Dufferin—Caledon as an amendment as well to this bill, it would help improve this bill.

I know there are a number of issues that were addressed by a number of the members where people can be inadvertently or unfairly impacted in their volunteer activities when they're doing this research. I'll tell you how easily it can happen, too. As I was listening to those remarks—I don't know whether I've got time to get it in, but the member from Windsor—Tecumseh mentioned it. I was coming back from a trip from the Caribbean one

time with three other couples, my wife and I. We crossed the border at Sarnia, where I live. I found out about this after. We cleared secondary and all that stuff; we just went right through, with no problems. But I found out later from a friend of mine—his sister, at the time, worked for customs, and someone made an anonymous phone call ahead of time. They said that a number of us were on this trip—they mentioned my name—and said that they knew we'd be bringing back some kind of contraband. Now, they never stopped us, because she said, "I knew you guys, and I knew that wasn't right." So she didn't bother following up on it. But that's how some simple kind of thing—I'm wondering now if that might still be on file somewhere. This person, at the time—she's retired now—didn't act on it. But the ability for people to be able to do these kinds of things anonymously, get them on some type of a record—I forgot all about it till this debate going on here today.

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So I certainly support the bill, with amendment, and I think the sooner we get it to committee—and I really urge the government to take a look at those kinds of amendments so that we can make this bill even better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's certainly my pleasure to stand and add comment to my colleague from Oshawa's comments, and also to the member from Beaches–East York, who gave us a little bit of a history lesson as far as the Liberals go.

I'd just like to add a little history from this side of the room. In fact, I am the only member of the 41st Parliament to defeat a Liberal cabinet minister.

To add comment to the member from Oshawa, she went to great length talking about those who suffer from mental health issues and the fact that often the police non-conviction records can be a barrier to employment or to volunteering opportunities and a barrier for those in post-secondary education, as far as the successful completion of their studies.

Due to privacy legislation and concerns, without qualifiers to explain what exactly it is that's showing up on this non-conviction record, we're seeing people who are unfairly being rejected from being put in placements that would allow them to complete their post-secondary studies and go on to be the doctors, the lawyers or what have you for future generations. So I certainly think, specifically around mental health issues—that's a touchy subject for me, having had the portfolio of community safety and correctional services for a short period of time and seeing those with mental health issues who end up in the corrections system who really shouldn't be there. They should be getting help out in the community. We don't want to be re-victimizing people who are already suffering from a disease. We want to see them get the supports they need to succeed. We don't want to see a barrier to them receiving future employment or volunteer opportunities.

That was a short two minutes, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I follow in the steps of an illustrious cabinet minister, but a Liberal one.

Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this bill.

What's really nice about this bill is that very rarely do we have all-party support for a principle, and it's really, really nice to see that all parties, at least in principle, support this bill. So I'm really pleased.

I look forward to the speedy passage of this bill, because this is a bill that's going to have a real impact on people's lives, and the sooner we can pass it, the sooner we can fix the loopholes, the better it is for the lives of the people it impacts. I know that there are a number of people, even as we speak today, who are waiting for this legislation to be passed so that they don't have the negative impacts that people in the past have had to live through because of these loopholes.

All I can say is, this is a really good bill. It's about balancing public safety while respecting privacy and human rights. If passed, this legislation will develop the province's first-ever clear, consistent and comprehensive framework for how police record checks are conducted in Ontario.

I want to applaud the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services for the leadership he has shown in bringing this legislation forward and the speed with which he has brought it forward, the speed with which consultations were done, because this really is something that needs to be passed as soon as possible so that the positive impact of this can be felt by all Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Oshawa for final comments.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I appreciate all the thoughtful comments from my colleagues around the room.

I would also like to challenge the member from Beaches–East York to once in a while resist the urge to stir things up. But going on, I thank him for reminding us of the personal connections we do have to these big issues in the province, that all of us do have those personal stories of people in common.

Also, to the member for Sarnia–Lambton, I thank him for his personal border-crossing story. It kind of begs the question, how many other people are reminded of incidents and how many things may be lurking in some of our own records, potentially?

Thank you to the member from Windsor West for reminding us about some of those barriers to personal success, specifically in regard to mental health and ensuring that those who have been through their own personal challenging journey, whether it involves corrections or whether it's just someone in our community, when they are on the other side of that journey, are not meeting with barriers when it comes to employment, when it comes to education and when it comes to setting goals and achieving them.

Finally, the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care: I appreciate what she was saying, that we want to see this take effect. We want to see this get out and into our communities and make that difference, balancing public safety with privacy and human rights.

As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, this is a good bill. It's been an initiative brought forward through a very collaborative process that has clearly built on the work and advocacy of many groups and many individuals who strengthen our communities and work so hard to keep them safe.

We want our communities to be communities in which people can go about their business and live their lives while being presumed innocent, and that is the foundation of our society. So we are really glad to see this change come and we are, I'm sure, all glad to be a part of it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. Further debate?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Mr. Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with the Chair of Cabinet and also the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

I'm pleased to rise today and speak on Bill 113, the Police Record Checks Reform Act. I'm proud that our government is moving forward with a clear and balanced approach to the way we do police checks in this province. The new framework, as we heard earlier, will follow the LEARN Guidelines. These principles have received wide-ranging input from many sectors, including police services, civil liberty groups, mental health advocates, community safety workers and business, among others. And it is an approach already being used across the majority of the province.

We are confident that this legislation will protect public safety while also respecting privacy. There's no question that personal privacy is a cherished principle for the people in this province, but there are exceptions, one of which is the well-accepted practice of police background checks. I'm sure many of us in the House have either gone through the process themselves or know someone who has needed to submit to a police check as part of an employer's hiring requirement. I know I had to do it to volunteer, for example, at my kids' nursery school and also at their school.

These checks are valuable tools for employers and help protect our children and vulnerable members in our society. But too often, the sharing of personal information goes too far. Instead of protecting public safety, it can undermine an individual's ability to engage in society.

We have heard today and we have heard from too many Ontarians who have faced unnecessary challenges because of the inappropriate sharing of non-conviction and non-criminal information, such as mental health records disclosed during routine police record checks with others. Regular folks who have had mental health issues, for example, have had their educational and employment opportunities placed in jeopardy because of this sharing of some of their information and, unfairly,

have lost important opportunities and jobs. It makes it harder for some Ontarians to get a steady, meaningful job or to volunteer with a charity or non-profit organization.

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In these instances, police record checks can become barriers, unfairly and unnecessarily restricting the rights and freedoms of our citizens and exposing them to the possible misuse of their information and the system.

We've also heard from many of our partners, stakeholders, police services, businesses and volunteer organizations that there is a need for consistent practices and policies across the province. Bill 113 addresses these concerns in a clear and comprehensive manner. First off, this bill would set province-wide standards for the types of police record checks available across Ontario. It provides consistent language across the province for three levels of checks: criminal, judicial matters and vulnerable sector checks. It also helps to remove the barriers to opportunity for many residents by prohibiting the release of non-criminal information such as mental health records and strictly limiting the release of non-conviction records.

It should be noted that the legislation also specifies time limits on the non-conviction information released in vulnerable sector checks under the exceptional disclosure provision, which also establishes a test for the very narrow circumstances under which this information may be released. These tests are vital to ensuring the necessary information is provided in vulnerable sector checks so those who need it most can make sure our children and seniors will continue to be protected.

Also with this bill, we are ensuring that individuals will have a chance to review their non-conviction records and seek a reconsideration of the information contained in their checks—so a requirement for police services to establish standard processes and more consistency.

This new legislation will directly address the release of non-criminal information that can create barriers for people's education, employment, volunteering and other matters. But let me be clear: This bill will not affect the safety of Ontarians. This will ensure that those most in need of protection—children and seniors—will not be put at increased risk. It's not always easy to balance personal privacy and public safety, but this legislation does exactly that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member from St. Catharines.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I have been very impressed with the tone of this debate. It is in keeping with a book by Bob Rae that I've been reading recently called *What's Happened to Politics?* Now, you can't hold props up, but there it is. It's selling for only \$24.99 Canadian. That has nothing to do with the debate other than it talks about the tone of the debate.

What I'm pleased with today is what I consider to be largely a constructive tone taken by all members of the House—conciliatory and constructive. That isn't the norm, unfortunately, anymore, but I think in this particular debate it is, and I think that's because there's close to

a consensus. Your speech certainly demonstrated this, Mr. Speaker; that there's a consensus amongst members of the House about the importance of this legislation, but also you have suggested some cautions for it that I think are important.

I know there are a number of people who have been quoted about how important this is. Former MPP Christine Elliott, for instance, is quoted as saying the following—and she was very much involved with mental illness issues in the committee of the Legislature: “I do see it as a problem if there's non-criminal information being released,” said Conservative MPP Christine Elliott (Whitby–Oshawa) in an interview. “There seems to be a piecemeal approach taken by police forces across the province. I would definitely be in favour of studying this with a view to having legislation that can be enforced across the province.” That was found in the *Toronto Star* on June 11, 2014.

I think there are people of all political persuasions in this House who recognize that trying to find the appropriate balance between, yes, you want the checks on people—Jerry Ouellette, a former member of the Legislature, for instance, was instrumental in bringing forward a private member's bill and certainly a suggestion that there be very careful checks with people involved in sports because Jerry, himself, was involved in sports. I think it's exceedingly important we have that kind of consensus.

I know my friend the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change would like to add to this particular debate. He has some specific instances that I recall him talking about in cabinet committees regarding this legislation when it was in its formative stage. So I will now yield the floor to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: That would be me—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The floor is all yours, sir.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: —Toronto Centre, the centre of the universe, as they say. You can imagine how that plays back home in Winnipeg. They always call me the member from Winnipeg. You can imagine how much I get teased, Mr. Speaker.

I want to pay tribute to the official opposition and the third party, because I agree with the member from St. Catharines: I always like Thursday afternoon. It's my favourite time in the House because we don't have to be rabidly partisan and we can actually—

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I have to tell you, people like this tie. I had my Ukrainian friends call this the Ukrainian tie and my other friends call this the Ikea tie. So I'll leave it up to—

Mr. Jim Wilson: It's actually a 1980s tie.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The 1980s tie, yes. Jim, we won't go into what you and I were doing in the 1980s.

Anyway, what I was going to say is, part of what's interesting—

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Maybe the House can be too friendly, Mr. Speaker; I don't know.

I did want to say something about this. I reflect on my youth because, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Steve Clark: On your misspent youth.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: My misspent youth, as the member for Leeds–Grenville said.

I grew up in an inner-city neighbourhood in Montreal. That inner-city neighbourhood was, I would say, a heavily policed neighbourhood. It wasn't Nepean–Carleton; it wasn't that gracious a neighbourhood. It was a very hard-edged downtown Montreal neighbourhood I grew up in, and it was heavily policed, and a lot of kids who were five or 10 years older than me were often in conflict with the law.

Then my parents did very well. My dad got his own company going, and we moved out to suburban Montreal. At that time, that was not a heavily policed neighbourhood. But I noticed that people who were five or 10 years older than me were spray-painting, were sometimes drinking and driving a bit and doing a lot of the same things that people did in the heavily policed neighbourhood that I lived in, except they never came into conflict with the law.

I represent downtown Toronto. I represent places like Regent Park, Moss Park and St. James Town. I see a lot of kids at 14 or 15 doing the same things that the member for Essex, probably, and I did in some of our misspent youth, or the things that the member for Leeds–Grenville and I did in our misspent youth. We never got in conflict with the law.

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Well, okay. The member for Leeds–Grenville and I never got in conflict with the law.

I say this because we're—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I'm trying to make a very serious point, because I really have an appeal here to my colleagues. The issue of carding comes up a lot. In the neighbourhoods where I live, where there's heavy policing and heavy police checks, kids get in trouble for doing things that many of us did at 14 or 15. Some of us didn't live in heavily policed neighbourhoods so we never came into conflict with the law for those kinds of things.

One of the problems that I've noticed in a lot of urban neighbourhoods, and maybe in some other communities, is that a lot of the kids, especially many young black men, will end up being in perpetual conflict with the law—because it changes the dynamic with the police. Records get developed and people become criminalized. I think one of the things this law does—it's one of the first foundations to do that.

It's also different times. I remember, growing up in Montreal, when I was 18 or 19, I'd go out to gay bars in the city to have beers with my mates, something most of us probably did at 18, 19, 20 or 21, whenever the age was legal—because I'm sure none of us ever snuck into a bar under age. We just would not do those things, being fine, upstanding Ontarians.

I also remember, and I just want to say this—

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I know, but they stopped interrupting me.

At that time, you would get charged, if you were in a gay bar, for being found in a bawdy house, which was a felony conviction. A lot of young men I knew who were

gay would get charged—today we would think that was outrageous—and that would carry on. So as time changes, things become more progressive.

I want to thank my colleagues for an elevated debate. I think we're of one mind: This is a great piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to thank all members who participated in this afternoon's debate, keeping it civil, keeping it friendly.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It is now 6 o'clock. This House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Wednesday 30 September 2015

Mercredi 30 septembre 2015



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 30 September 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 30 septembre 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRENGTHENING CONSUMER PROTECTION AND ELECTRICITY SYSTEM OVERSIGHT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 POUR RENFORCER LA PROTECTION DES CONSOMMATEURS ET LA SURVEILLANCE DU RÉSEAU D'ÉLECTRICITÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 24, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 112, An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 / *Projet de loi 112, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2010 sur la protection des consommateurs d'énergie et la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Twenty-six minutes? I thought I would get a new 60; that the clock would start over. Apparently, that's not the way it works here. I got up early looking forward to the opportunity to speak to this bill a little longer.

On Thursday, we heard the speech from the Minister of Energy; he barely spoke about Bill 112. Yesterday, I got the same speech in the Standing Committee on Estimates. He must be trying to perfect it and hoping that if he says it often enough, over and over again, he's actually going to believe it himself. I guarantee you, Mr. Speaker—oh, a new Speaker; that was quick—that he doesn't believe what he's saying himself. But I think he's got instructions from the corner office on the second floor: "Minister, you have to say this speech over and over again at least three or four times a day for the next few weeks so that you will believe it."

For the new members here, they just hook them up to the intravenous Kool-Aid and they've got them all fixed up within a couple of weeks.

I want to talk about some of the things the minister has been talking about in addition to Bill 112, which he never spoke about—he had an hour to speak, and he used about 15 minutes, maybe. I don't even know if he mentioned

the bill, and I question whether he's even read the bill. He's been so busy reciting his speech trying to defend the government's sale of Hydro One and how the Ontario Energy Board is going to protect consumers.

Bill 112 is essentially a consumer protection bill. But I guess I would ask the question: If this government is so bent on protecting the consumer, where in the name of Sam Hill have they been for the last 12 years, when energy rates in this province have tripled and skyrocketed to the highest in North America?

When you consider consumer energy bills and compare them with Quebec or Manitoba—and my colleague here from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington has made a pretty big deal and done a lot of research on the cost of hydro in Manitoba and Quebec relative to here in Ontario. He's not talking through his hat or taking these numbers out of the air like the government likes to do. He has actually done the analysis. He has compared specific, legitimate energy bills from Manitoba versus those here in Ontario, and specific, legitimate energy bills from Quebec and those here in Ontario. There are bills with people's names on them. They're not a reasonable facsimile generated out of the minister's office. They are actual people in Manitoba with real homes and real businesses, and people in Quebec with real homes and real businesses. He has compared them: One of them is about half the price of ours and one of them is about two thirds the price of ours.

So, if you want to talk about consumer protection, the best consumer protection you can give is to give the consumer a fair deal, one that they can afford, so that they can live their lives in comfort and dignity. I say "dignity" when I'm talking about the elderly in this province. When you think about—for some of us—your parents in the 1970s and how many of your parents built a home in the 1970s. Remember the 1970s?

Mr. Grant Crack: I do.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, you would.

Yes, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs would remember the 1970s. He would probably remember the 1930s.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, I remember plenty of the 1970s; some of it I'm trying to forget.

If you look at the 1970s and how many of your people, who might have been parents—or in the case of the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, it might have been his brothers or sisters who were building homes in the 1970s. All the rage then was, "You know what? You've got to heat that thing electrically. Get them electric baseboards in there because, you know what? You're not going to

have to worry about a furnace. You're not going to have to worry about an oil tank and fuel or gas lines. You're just going to have them nice, cute, little electric baseboards down at the bottom of the walls in your home. You're just going to take that little dial and just turn it up, because, you see, electricity is virtually free. It's so cheap, you can't even put a price on it. So heat your homes electrically."

Do you remember the water heaters? I won't sing the song in the Legislature here, but you remember the Cascade 40 water heater? You know, you've got to heat your water—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, we've started off with little outbursts, have we? I believe the Speaker instructed the House that we are going to go through the Chair, and I see that's slipping again. So let's get back on track, folks. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, if there was any implication that I'm not going through the Chair, I apologize. If it seems I turn—I just like to keep my feet moving because if I stand in one place too often, I might grow roots.

I just want to say, Speaker, do you remember those Cascade 40 ads about how important it was to get that water heated electrically? One of the ads said, "You know, with the new Cascade 40 electric water heater, you can virtually leave your tap running forever and never run out of hot water." What a bunch of baloney that was. But, again—

Mr. Rick Nicholls: You watch too much TV.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I say to the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex, it's not how much TV you watch, it's how much you pay attention. I'm going to give you some advice, through the Speaker, of course: Always pay attention and you might learn something. I hope you're paying attention now.

0910

That water heater—you could leave it running forever, because the story behind it was, and the message behind it was, that electricity is so cheap in this province it's not even worth putting a price on. It's not even worth the trouble of pricing it, it's so cheap. And that's what happened. So now those same people who built those homes in the 1970s are aged. They need that heat on a lot more than they did in the 1970s when they might have been in their thirties or forties, and now they're in their seventies or eighties. When those cold winter days come and they have to turn that thermostat up—it's killing them. Not because they're freezing to death, but because it's a choice between freezing to death or going broke because of the energy policies of this government.

I say to the minister, if you are so bent and determined to protect the consumer, where the heck have you been? Where have you been in the last 12 years when the consumer has been crying for some relief on energy rates? They're crying while you turn your back on them, close your eyes and ignore their pleas, because every time we

turn around, your policies have driven the price of electricity up.

Mark my words, Speaker—and I say this through you directly: On November 1, when that great protector at the Ontario Energy Board that has been so protective of consumers that we've seen electricity rates triple under this government, because it can't do a darn thing to prevent the rises in electricity rates when it is faced with the policies of this government—mark my words: On November 1, when hydro rates get set again, they're going up. They're going up because of this insane policy of the government that they invoked under the Green Energy Act—the cost of electricity, the contracts they have signed.

In June alone—I know that on that side of the House, when you say the name "Parker Gallant," they all roll their eyes. But this guy is an educated banker; he's retired. He decided he didn't like what he was seeing on his electricity bills. He is speaking for all people, everyone in Ontario, when he challenges the government not only on their policies, but on the way that they dispense information and whether or not they are truthful when they tell the stories about their energy rates here in Ontario.

Parker Gallant had a piece in the paper that said in June, Ontario lost—I may get the figure just a little bit wrong, so forgive me if I'm not 100% accurate, because I didn't write it down; I'm just going by my memory, because I try to pay attention—\$224 million. Some \$224 million in June alone was the price that Ontario paid to give away electricity to other jurisdictions.

Mr. Chris Ballard: Yeah, right.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I see the man from Newmarket has awakened and he says, "Yeah, right." Well, if he's got some other figures, let's hear them.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: "Yeah, you're right." Oh, I see. Yes, right. You're confirming what I—through you—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): To the Speaker—not through the Speaker; to the Speaker. And you got off the track again, didn't you?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's the heckling.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, get that car back on the road. Thanks.

Go ahead.

Mr. John Yakabuski: To you, Speaker, I want to thank the member from Newmarket-Aurora for confirming what I said about \$224 million being wasted in June alone by giving away energy to other jurisdictions.

Let's talk a little bit about Bill 112, which the minister chose not to do. This is, again, the government trying to purport themselves as the other great protector of the consumer. They're bringing in this legislation that bans door-to-door sales in the electricity and energy contract business—in that sector. Nobody is arguing that. In fact, the sector itself has pretty much gone away from door-to-door because they recognize the challenges they've had in that, and they recognize that when you have rogue salespeople you're going to have problems. I spoke a little bit about that when I spoke earlier, on Thursday.

But some of the steps they're taking, quite frankly, go too far. If they want to actually do that, then they might as well just support Sarah Campbell's bill—pardon me, the member from Kenora—Rainy River. I think her bill is Bill 111, if I'm not mistaken. Her bill would just ban the practice altogether of having energy contracts available for sale.

They don't want to do that, you see—and that's why the member from Kenora—Rainy River's bill is not going to go anywhere—because it would be subject to an amazingly long, protracted, painful court challenge; you'd be outlawing the rights of people to make a living. But the government may as well do that, because that's essentially what they are doing here. But they want to do it by stealth and trickery and chicanery, as opposed to doing it straight out.

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I might suggest that is about as far away from parliamentary language as you can get.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): That may be your opinion. If I think he goes over the borderline I'll let him know. He's treading on the line right now with those ones.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Certainly I don't think it's ever been against the law to tread on the line, Speaker, has it?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It is when the Speaker thinks it is.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Apparently you don't at this juncture. I appreciate that. I'm saying this to the Speaker.

A part of this bill that really doesn't make sense to me is the 20-day cooling-off period. We understood that with electricity contracts there had to be a verification call and all of this and stuff like that. But this 20-day cooling-off period applies to any product that an energy re-marketer would offer to consumers—and the Minister of the Environment would love this—even an energy-saving, greenhouse-gas cutting, high-tech thermostat that would reduce use because it would make energy use in the home or business more efficient. If I wanted to buy one of those under this legislation, I would have to wait 20 days, and I'd have to go through a verification call with 26 actual questions I would have to answer. You know what most people would be saying? "You can take that thermostat, and you know where you can"—yes, exactly.

Essentially, what they are saying is, "You're not going to be in business." So why don't they just do that? But you see, that's not the way this government works. It doesn't like to do things in a transparent and open and accountable way. That's what they talk about but, my good gosh, all we have to mention is the word "Sudbury." Energy prices in Sudbury are just as wrong as they are across the rest of the parts of Ontario. Those poor people in Sudbury who have to pay a high price for energy are paying a high price in the news today, because their lovely city is in the news because of a bribery scandal. They'd love to be talking about electricity rates in Sudbury, but all anybody wants to talk about is the bribery scandal.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, the member from Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Pursuant to standing order 23(b)(i), I ask the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, through the Speaker, to return to the subject of the marketing of energy contracts door to door, which is exactly what this bill is discussing.

While the member is free to have his opinions about whatever issue he feels may be germane, they do not relate to the subject of the bill at hand.

0920

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you for your point of order. If it would have been a little shorter, it would have been nice, but I get the drift.

The member will refrain from drifting again: next time, last time.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, I do my very best to stay on the subject. But I think it is fair to say that from time to time there are overlapping interests. I appreciate when you intervene and say that we have to move back to that. I appreciate that, and I will accept gratefully those admonishments. I don't think it's necessary to get the point of order all the time that the member from Mississauga—Streetsville likes to take a week to deliver—and talk slowly so that it takes more of my time off the clock.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Be careful, that's a point of order, on making an allegation—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yeah, yeah, allegations. Yes.

I'll tell you what they do care about in Sudbury. They wonder if some of these energy producers in the province that are getting rich on \$50 billion in global adjustment that is going into the pockets in the last 10 years—some people would call that bribery. So I guess for the people in Sudbury, they figure there are two bribery scandals going on: one on the energy rates and one, of course, that Mr. Olivier was offered a bribe to not run as a candidate in the election.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: We can say "bribery" because the OPP have said it's bribery.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Okay, my patience is thinning.

A point of order from the member from Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, if the member will actually read the standing orders, he will know that he is presuming the outcome of a legal proceeding and making an unsubstantiated allegation. That's at least two points of order that the member has drifted from, in addition to straying, once again, from the topic of the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Mississauga—Streetsville likes to bring up points of order, but he also likes to yell after he's done. That won't be accepted.

The member will not drift again.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker, for recognizing the fact that the member from Missis-

sauga—Streetsville really just likes to create discord in the House as opposed to actually making legitimate—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, I've been up a lot. I'm getting tired of getting up and down like at a football game.

The member—you're not exactly innocent from causing aggravation. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's interesting that you would use the term "innocent," Speaker. In this day and age, the funny thing about the Liberal government on the other side is that they presume—you see it in the Premier every time she drifts on a subject. She presumes that if someone has not been proven guilty, then they absolutely are innocent of any wrongdoing whatsoever. That's the premise she seems to work on when conducting business in her office.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): If you don't get back to the subject we are discussing, I'll be moving on to a new person. Last warning.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I accept that warning. I fully understand the authority that you have on these matters.

Bill 112, An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998: We understand the genesis of this legislation. I was here in 2010 when they made the changes. Everybody agreed with it. That act passed with the support of all parties in the House because it did the right thing. It prevented—what's the word?—in my opinion, the wrongful acts that were taking place at the door in marketing retail energy contracts. I think we kind of took care of that.

We're okay with banning the practice of selling an energy contract at the door. As I said, we're concerned about some of the measures in this bill that are designed to portray the government as being so caring about the consumer that they're going to bring in the strongest possible legislation that they can to protect them, when, in fact, all they're really trying to do—you'll see. You will see when this passes. It's going to pass, I suspect, although I haven't had the word from the third party at this point. The critic for the third party will speak later. I believe he's speaking this morning on the bill. I suspect that the third party is going to support this legislation. They may not support this legislation. Depending on what a good job the government does—well, they've got the majority. The bill is going to pass. I'm quite certain the bill is going to pass.

You're going to see these Liberal ministers going out there, and big press releases saying, "The Liberal government stands up, protecting consumers in Ontario once again with the strongest consumer protection law in the country when it comes to retail energy contracts." And they're going to blah blah blah, but you won't have any part in their talking about what they've done to the Ontario energy consumer over the past 12 years. In fact, they walk around like they've got blinders on or their heads are in the clouds, thinking somehow these energy rates rose as a result of—gosh, I can't even think of the

process. The process of osmosis, maybe; I don't know. Somehow they just, on their own, rose in the province of Ontario, and the government policies had nothing to do with it.

I recall, Speaker, when George Smitherman—remember George Smitherman?

Mr. Todd Smith: Oh, yes.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, yes. George knew everything, and you knew he was going to save the world. He was going to save the world, and he brought in the Green Energy Act. Speaker, do you remember that?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Drifting.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm not drifting at all. You talk about consumer protection.

In 2009, the Liberals, with their massive majority, passed the Green Energy Act. I might say that they had the support of the third party on that as well.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: How do we get these majorities? Out of osmosis?

Mr. John Yakabuski: The smugness of the Minister of the Environment: Now he's saying, "How did we get these majorities?" You just keep up that smugness. One of these days you'll get your comeuppance, because you know what? You can't rule this province forever—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Don't give me the hand manoeuvres or anything. My patience is gone. And the minister knows better than to get into a one-on-one.

You have one minute, thank goodness. Go.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I feel like they're opening the gates of the gallows here, Speaker. What's going on? I have one minute. I'm glad that I received that last minute, because if I didn't, I probably wouldn't be around for questions and comments either. I'm sorry about that.

I do want to say that we're going to support this legislation and we'll look for amendments, because it does go too far. It does go too far, and the government needs to know that. They don't have to go too far in order to protect the consumer.

In fact, what they're doing here with this bill is they're taking away legitimate consumer choice. You can balance the two. This government doesn't seem to get it. They're so fixated with putting a pretend image about themselves out there that they're forgetting the reality of what's going on in the world.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's a pleasure to rise to contribute to this debate this morning.

The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke always starts us off in the morning with his debates. He's very electrified. I notice that you are working very hard when the member is speaking. It's great that we're all engaged in today's debate.

This bill talks about consumer protection, Speaker. It's not news to anyone here how many calls we get in our constituency offices about these door-to-door sales con-

tracts that people enter into, that they really had no idea what they were signing.

0930

I had an example—actually, one of the constituents from not my riding but London North Centre. They came to me last year, and I didn't have the heart to say that I couldn't help them, so I personally sat and helped these constituents. I called the energy company. They were very co-operative, believe it or not, to actually cancel the contract with the constituents. But it was a mess, and these people were devastated. They had to pay these high electrical bills, thinking that when they signed this contract, they were going to get competitive rates. It didn't turn out that way.

In this bill, they talk about the cooling-off period. Ten days originally was the cooling-off; it is now 20 days. It's never going to be enough, because people don't understand these contracts. The bill that's been presented by our member from Kenora—Rainy River is really the bill that we should be supporting in order to protect consumers and make it transparent—what rates look like when you enter a contract. There shouldn't be that practice allowed.

I just want to thank the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke for giving us his entertaining debate this morning, and I look forward to further debate on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. David Zimmer: What has been lost sight of, at least in this morning's debate so far, is that this piece of legislation dealing with the Ontario Energy Board really has to be considered in the context of the plan to broaden the ownership of Hydro One. We're all aware of the initiative behind and the reasons for broadening the ownership of Hydro One.

Hand in hand with broadening the ownership of Hydro One is the reform of or changes to the OEB. With the ownership of Hydro One being broadened, it's very important that the OEB play a strong oversight role.

It sets out the OEB's mandate to act as a fair, impartial and independent regulator. It will provide the OEB with a really robust set of powers to oversee and regulate the energy sector, and that includes the following: setting just and reasonable rates; enforcing its oversight powers through the ability to impose penalties for non-compliance; and licensing market participants, including electricity transmitters and distributors, and imposing various licensing conditions; for instance, service and reliability standards.

The OMB will now have—

Mr. John Yakabuski: OEB.

Hon. David Zimmer: —OEB—an increased responsibility, and this is important, for reviewing and approving applications for mergers, acquisitions, and divestures for transmission or distribution of assets, to ensure that ratepayers are not harmed as a result of this transaction.

So you see, you have to take the new OEB Act and consider it in the context of what we're trying to do with

broadening the ownership of Hydro One. It's to ensure protection and fairness.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Stormont.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It's been a lovely morning. Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Thank you, Speaker. I see you're having a mental lapse here, I suppose, listening to some of the debate this morning.

I always enjoy listening to my colleague here from Renfrew talking about some of the issues, especially when it comes to hydro. I mean, could there be a bigger mess under this government—\$50 billion over the last 10 years in global adjustment. People would not have believed that. Of course, this government doesn't want anybody to believe that.

I was watching the press interview last year after the Auditor General's release. Their only tactic was to say that she wasn't qualified to make decisions. This is where this government has gone. It's an embarrassment. Even they're embarrassed; they're trying to discredit some of the officers of the House. Of course, we see that in the last budget, when they took away their powers, so these things won't happen again. These officers come out and really talk about some of the ridiculous policies that we've seen in the last 10 years—\$224 million in June alone.

These are embarrassing figures, and the ratepayers are paying them. The member from London—Fanshawe talked about the constituent who is desperate to look for savings and, of course, signing up for contracts they shouldn't get into.

Seniors are desperate for savings in the electricity field. What used to be, as the member from Renfrew said, an extremely cheap commodity in this province is now off the wall. It's out of reach. People are walking in, turning off their heat in the wintertime, trying to save heat so they can go out and buy some food. That's where we've gone under this Green Energy Act and with the policies. It's the biggest question I get every day. It's no wonder when this government comes out to rural Ontario, they actually get booed and have issues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's a pleasure to be in the House this morning. I want to talk to our House leader and make sure I'm on House duty every time the member from Pembroke—Nipissing—what is your—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Renfrew.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Renfrew, sorry. He never disappoints. He brings it with a level of intensity rarely seen in here. However, I still am no further educated on the bill than I was before he spoke. Thankfully, our caucus experts provide us with these wonderful briefing notes that I've been going through and, with a cursory look at this, the bill seems to show that there's a little bit of sugar-coating on the topside, in the first part of the bill, dealing with door-to-door salespeople when it comes

to energy sales—those folks who show up at your door, typically younger students who are struggling, looking for work. They jump into these door-to-door sales positions. They are trained to be very aggressive. They are trained to get into your house, get your bill, take a look at it, talk you into circles and have you sign, and get out the door with a contract signed. People have no idea what they have just signed. There's no question that these types of processes and the predatory aspect of it have to be reined in.

However, the back side of this bill, the second part, deals with an enormously complex issue in the Ontario Energy Board. Essentially, the government is paving the way, clearing the road, for large, private multinationals to circumvent the OEB process when it comes to new transmission lines. This is, I would imagine, an ask out of the negotiations that have been taking place behind closed doors between the government and the proponents of private energy, something that will lessen public scrutiny, lessen oversight, lessen transparency, but most definitely increase hydro rates for ratepayers and businesses all across the province of Ontario. We're very fearful of this bill, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has two minutes.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the member from London–Fanshawe, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and the member for Essex for their comments. I say to the member for Essex, if he thought he learned little about the bill in my speech, he should have been here for the minister's one on Thursday.

Part of the reason that they brought in this bill—it's a bit of cover, too, with the Hydro One sale. They're making sure that they've got themselves covered on the Hydro One sale, but first, they want what they see as a positive piece of legislation for consumers, and secondly, part of the changes to the Ontario Energy Board Act is to help them with the sale of Hydro One and allow it to conduct itself should it become privatized, or should at least a portion of it be sold to private interests.

Again, as I say, this is designed to get some positive stuff out there because the government has botched the sale of Hydro One so badly—so badly that most recent polls have 83% of the public opposing the sale of Hydro One. When 83% of the public oppose something—it's often you'll find 47% opposed, 46% are favour and 5% don't care, or 38% are opposed, 37% are in favour and 15% don't care, whatever. But in this case, when the numbers are so staggering and stark—over 80% of the people polled said they don't believe the province should sell Hydro One. They are doing everything they can to give themselves a smokescreen and to cloud the issue when it comes to Hydro One.

We have an opposition day motion today and it's calling for transparency and accountability and a release of the analysis and the figures, and I hope that these folks over on the other side of this aisle actually do the right thing for a change and support that motion.

0940

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's a pleasure to be able to address the matter of Bill 112, the government's—and I say this with some irony—Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act, 2015.

I will address some of the main points in this bill. I will then look at what was said by the minister when he spoke to this House a short while ago. I'll touch on some of the dangers that are implicit in the government's drive to bypass the Ontario Energy Board.

First, I want to say that the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke got it pretty right when he said that this government is taking a beating on the sale of Hydro One. It has intended to try and surround that sale with as much camouflage as it possibly can. If you listen to the Minister of Energy, he speaks about the power of the Ontario Energy Board to control prices because he well knows that this ill-fated venture to privatize utilities—not just Hydro One, but to allow privatization across this province—will mean much higher hydro rates. His only shield—his only argument—is that he has a regulator that can actually take action to protect consumers. In this act, he substantially undermines that regulator, and in saying that the regulator can control prices, he ignores the reality of what has happened in Ontario for the last 12 years and he ignores the reality of what happens when you have privatized energy systems.

There are two bills here: One presents itself as a consumer protection act, and this is clearly where the government wants to focus; the second is the whole question of the regulator and how that regulator will operate in the future.

This bill will give the government explicit authority to bypass the regulator when it brings forward new transmission projects. These projects could be very expensive; they could be totally cost-ineffective. They could be projects that are driven politically by a cabinet that is responding to economic demands of big players in the energy sector.

We were in estimates yesterday, and I asked the minister about whether Hydro One would be allowed to go ahead with a transmission project given the cabinet push for a transmission project and the sidelining of the Ontario Energy Board. What he said to me was interesting. He didn't think we should necessarily think it would be Hydro One that would build these transmission projects. There may well be other companies, power players in North America, maybe power players globally, that want to put in transmission lines. As you may well be aware, Speaker, the way the market, the electricity system, works in Ontario, is that, if a company like Hydro One puts in a transmission project, its ability to profit goes up. It gets to reclaim about 9% profit on that. Whether it's helpful to the people of this province, whether it's good for the energy system or the electricity system is, by the way, not central to this system.

What we've had historically—and I will admit there have been flaws and there will be flaws with anything that we have in terms of energy provision—is a system where governments have tried to focus on meeting the needs of the economy and the people of Ontario. That is going away. This government has decided that what's good for investors is something that Ontario will have to live with. This bill will aid this government in privatizing Hydro One and allowing privatization of utilities across Ontario.

Right now, the government has all the power it needs to initiate and champion priority transmission projects. What it's doing with this bill is giving the power to bypass the OEB and bypass public hearings where consumer advocates and those who represent major power companies, major manufacturing and processing companies would no longer have the opportunity to question whether or not the project was needed in the first place. We've had that happen already here in Ontario. I'll get into that later when we talk about smart meters and how the government completely bypassed the regulatory process and burdened us with a \$2-billion bill for smart meters that produce virtually no savings and don't allow the government to meet its target for reducing peak demand. The government has already gone down this road. It has shown that it can't be trusted to bring forward policies that are allowed to be tested in open hearings with people who know the field, who can question and take apart bad projects.

The OEB is required to review and approve private sales of transmission companies to make sure they're in the public interest. If the government is sincere about wanting to strengthen the OEB's ability to protect consumers, it would take the whole sale of Hydro One and put it before the OEB for a hearing. Now frankly, I don't think it should be privatizing it at all—not a moment, not a bit should be privatized. But even using the government's own logic, a sale like this needs to be put into a public forum where it can be dissected and those who propose it can actually be forced to put the numbers on the table to show that it's valid or not valid, and be forced to defend their theories about how a private market works in the electricity sector. But they're not going to do that. They're going to let this whole thing go through, and after all the horses have left the barn, kick the barn door closed and say, "Well, God, we took care of that."

Bill 112 also proposes to change how consumer interests are represented at the OEB hearings. We have to ask—because it's not spelled out in this legislation—exactly what they have in mind. Is the government getting ready to stop paying money to people who intervene on the part of consumers and put in their own little government-owned watchdog? It's an open question, not answered in the legislation or in the numerous discussions that are taking place more widely.

The bill attempts to reform the electricity retailing industry, but this is a predatory industry, and it is one that needs to be phased out, not reformed. My colleague from Kenora-Rainy River introduced a bill to phase out these

predatory retailers. If the government really wants to protect consumers, they should follow the member from Kenora-Rainy River's private member's bill. We debated this a number of years ago—it might have been five or six years ago—the last time the Electricity Consumer Protection Act was before us. Our caucus at the time said to the government, "You can't reform these guys. You can only shut down an operation that doesn't bring benefit to the people of Ontario. That's the way to protect consumers." They wouldn't go there. They brought in rules that they said would protect consumers. We said at the time, "You'll be back because this won't protect consumers." It hasn't.

These further steps won't protect consumers. They may remove some irritation; that remains to be seen. But frankly, when you have an industry that only exists to make money for those people who are selling energy—that does not, in fact, reduce the bills for consumers; in fact, it adds to their monthly expenses—then you have to ask, why on earth does this exist? What's the utility, what's the use to the people of Ontario who are already facing severe problems trying to pay their hydro bills?

Customers sign up with these retailers, often just through pressure. The people who have come to me in the past who have signed up are typically seniors or people who don't have English as their first language, people who are more likely to be intimidated or confused by a salesperson at the door. They think that they may be getting some protection from future bill increases. They are not. The contracts are for the price of power only. They don't protect against increases in the cost of delivery, regulatory charges, the global adjustment or other non-energy charges.

0950

In their recent review of this industry, the Ontario Energy Board could not find a single fixed-rate contract that saved the consumer any money. But at the same time, energy retailers impose a cost on all of us, because we have to pay for the policing and enforcement of the rules that are in place now. Bill 112 would increase those regulatory and enforcement costs. Predatory industries are operating not in the interests of the people of Ontario, and their time to go has come.

I want to move over to the comments made by the Minister of Energy when he spoke to this bill on the 24th of September. I have to say it has been interesting this morning, watching members of the government go after the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, because the minister ranged just as widely when he spoke. In fact, I was talking to that member the other day, and we both agreed that what the minister had done was set a framework where you could basically bring in anything when you discuss this bill, because there were no constraints on where he was meandering—none.

I want to speak first to one of the phrases that this government has been using, and I'll quote the minister: "This legislation moves forward one of the vital pillars of our electricity modernization plan announced last spring...."

Now, “modernization plan” is a code word, or a waffle word, that we have learned over the last few years. That’s what privatization is when the Liberals talk about it before an election. They talk about modernization. They mean “selling it off”; getting rid of the public interest, bringing investors into the mix so that decisions about our future are made by how much an investor can make, not by what we need to build our economy and run our homes.

The minister went on: “As announced in April, our government is broadening the ownership of Hydro One....” Right now, Hydro One is owned by the people of Ontario. Across this province, from Kenora to Kingston, from Timmins to Windsor, the people of Ontario, as a body, own this corporation, and their ownership is going to be cut back dramatically so that a number of large corporations will be able to buy chunks of our electricity system.

So when the minister talks about broadening ownership, he’s talking about cutting out the people of Ontario and giving opportunities to investors on the London Stock Exchange, New York Stock Exchange, Tokyo—take your pick—people who operate globally, to buy up our electricity system. He’s taking what has been our birthright, something built by generations before us, and making sure that companies all over the world can own and control it. “Broadening ownership” can only be seen as an Orwellian term when it is used to describe what is going on with the sale of Hydro One.

The minister talks about the need to get money for infrastructure. I want to point out to you, Speaker, because I’ve listened to the Premier—she has talked about spending \$130 billion over a decade. This sale is projected to bring in \$4 billion.

Speaker, you don’t sell the plumbing in your house so that you can get wiring. You don’t sell your garage so you can pave the driveway. You don’t do those kinds of things, because the operation of a household, or the operation of an economy, requires many vital pieces of infrastructure. The ownership of Hydro One is vital to our ability to set our own course economically for the future.

I like the way the minister put this: “It is important to recognize that these billions of dollars in proceeds will pay down debt and pay for infrastructure, and that will be done without borrowing, without adding new taxes or without cutting important programs.”

It’s magic. How is it that government previously—how is it that during the Second World War, when Canada and Ontario were facing a great challenge on a global scale, we didn’t have to sell off our vital infrastructure? How is it that through the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, when we were building much of modern Ontario’s infrastructure, we weren’t selling off these assets?

Sir Adam Beck, the person who spearheaded the development of Ontario Hydro and spearheaded the development of public power in this province, was well aware that there was huge money to be made in the privatization of the hydro system. He warned consistently that there would be attacks to break off pieces of that

system so some investors could make a fortune, and so the people of Ontario would be forced to pay more.

I have to ask, if selling off Hydro One is so good—it’s magic; there’s no debt; there are no taxes; it’s fabulous—is it going to stop there? Ontario Power Generation? I’m sure you could get a buck for that. This building? It’s got great real estate potential. There could be a lot of condos in this building if you designed it right. Are we going to sell off schools? Are we going to sell off roads? Ah, roads: Yes, the government is a bit sensitive about roads. They saw what happened when the Tories sold off the 407.

However, Speaker, let’s look at the reality. This government is selling off critical pieces of infrastructure, undermining our ability to control our future, and talking on and on and on about the need to get this money. This doesn’t make sense.

The minister says the Ontario Energy Board is a central part of this focus on protecting the public interest, that the independent agency has the power to approve or disapprove rate increases. This board doesn’t review the Independent Electricity System Operator. It didn’t review the Ontario Power Authority when it made power deals with Bruce Power, which impact the electricity rate. They didn’t review the gas plants in Oakville or Mississauga, which had a substantial impact on our energy rates. This government has tried to make as much of the electricity system outside of the regulatory framework as possible. They want to continue on in this bill.

Speaker, this government has a huge public relations problem. More than three quarters of the people in this province oppose the sale of Hydro One and it is doing everything it can, putting out as much smoke as it can, putting mirrors up on street corners, lots of smoke and mirrors to try and confuse people about what’s really happening.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: No.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It is indeed, sir. It is indeed, Mr. Speaker.

The minister went on: “We have heard a great deal of baseless, unmitigated spin by members opposite that a utility like Hydro One, as its ownership is broadened”—that Orwellian word again—“would see rates rise as a result of broadening ownership.”

This government doesn’t understand, even though the facts are there to be seen, what privatization does to hydro rates.

Nova Scotia privatized its hydro system in 1992. It’s looking at the highest rates in the country, up there, contending with Ontario. Ontario has seen a sharp increase in its rates since the Liberals came to power in 2003 because it continued the privatization schemes of the Conservatives. What it did was slice by slice by slice. Ontario Power Generation couldn’t build any new generation, they couldn’t engage in renewable energy, and all the new power generation that came on stream was privatized—or virtually all, Speaker. We’ve seen the rates go up. We know they’re going to go up even more dramatically.

This government has ignored the track record of the last 12 years and the impact of privatization on Ontario. They've ignored the impact outside the province. When we look at Manitoba or Quebec, where the people and governments of those provinces have wisely retained ownership of the electricity system in their own hands, they have the lowest hydro rates in Canada.

Speaker, there's always a mix of technology and ownership when you talk about electricity rates, but the big difference between us, Quebec and Manitoba is this ongoing privatization and another great leap forward for private ownership of Ontario's infrastructure.

1000

The minister talked about the Ontario Energy Board and how in the last six months there had been a reduction in the cost of gas that was sold by Enbridge and Union Gas. Now, you may well be aware of this, Speaker; I'm hopeful that the minister is: Those distribution utilities, Enbridge and Union Gas, charge for their delivery. They charge for their system of pipes, compressors and their service.

Generally speaking, though, they pass through the cost of gas. They passed through a whopping increase two years ago, and as the price of gas has declined, they are bringing down that price. It wasn't that the Ontario Energy Board went and rattled their cages and said, "You've got to cut your prices." No, there was already a system in place, a pass-through of costs, and that is all we saw with the decision earlier this year. If the minister is saying that the Ontario Energy Board has the power to roll back all those increases, he's ignoring the reality on the ground with the OEB.

Interestingly, as well, the minister says, "To help streamline and clarify the ability of utilities to expand their business beyond electricity delivery, this legislation will provide greater scope to engage in non-utility activities and to participate in the many services related to the energy sector." Well, Speaker, as I understand it right now, these utilities can engage in conservation programs. They can put in place renewable power. A number of them have put in their own solar panels. But this is a far more problematic step.

A number of months ago, the minister was quoted as saying that one of the good things that may come out of this is that these increasingly privatized utilities will also be able to take over water delivery. The idea that we've privatized electricity and water, two essential services in this society, is one that people should recoil from, one that they should be shocked by. But this government is planning to change the tax rules so that smaller utilities can be purchased by Hydro One, this looming large, private giant in the electricity system, or by other privatized utilities or utilities that become privatized, bringing in private capital, expanding beyond electricity into water delivery.

That has got to make people pause. It has got to make people very concerned. If you ask people in Ontario if they want Hydro One privatized, 83% are against. If you suggested—and this is a reasonable conclusion from the

trajectory this government is going on—that there will be privatization of water services as well, you would be a lot closer to 100%.

This government wants Hydro One and other utilities to engage in a wide variety of business activities. The difficulty for any regulator is going to be separating which money gets assigned where—because it may well be that a private electricity company, a utility like Hydro One, decides to get into a venture in the United States. In fact, that has been contemplated in a number of discussions we've heard in this House. Let's say it's losing money there—can't make money on that. Very sharp accountants can bump up rates in Ontario to help pay for those losses elsewhere, and it can be extraordinarily difficult for a regulator to disentangle that whole mess.

This government is continuing to make life more difficult for Ontarians, and the privatization of Hydro One is going to be a significant part of that making life more difficult. This bill is designed to increase the cover that the government needs to proceed with its plans.

I want to note that the minister also says, "In the busy age of social media and technological change, customers are more immediately able to offer feedback. At present, the ways in which the Ontario Energy Board relates to consumer groups—residential, commercial and industrial—are locked in a rigid process designed for a different era."

Right now, when a utility comes before the OEB with a proposal for a rate increase, school boards are allowed to attend and challenge that rate increase, because it will reduce the amount of money available for education. People who represent low-income energy consumers can go before the energy board and challenge the increase. Major power consumers can go before the board and challenge the increase. No system is perfect; trials are not perfect, but a hearing in an open tribunal, where the decision-makers can be questioned under oath, where documents can be demanded, presented, reviewed and dissected, gives us the best chance of getting at the truth. The government is setting things up so that that open hearing process, making it possible for advocates to actually fight on behalf of consumers, may well be set aside. Speaker, that should worry you; it should worry your constituents.

I want to just say, the last point that the minister made was "the legislation before you today would give cabinet the power to designate key transmission corridors to expedite their construction." As I said at the beginning, the Ontario Energy Board would no longer be able to question whether a given transmission corridor made sense for the system as a whole. They would only be able to determine whether or not the money spent to build this new corridor was reasonable or unreasonable.

Speaker, you've been around the block a few times. You know that very powerful companies have the ability to speak to cabinet, speak to governments, and say to them, "We desperately need this, and, you know what, if we don't get this, we may have to cut back on employment or investment in other parts of Ontario." So, in fact,

the potential is, with a very large private Hydro One, controlled very likely by interests across North America and elsewhere in the world, they may well come to the cabinet and say, "We need this transmission project. We don't want to have to justify whether or not it's viable. We don't want to have to justify whether or not it's necessary. Our investors need the return. You override the OEB. Use that bypass mechanism that you put forward in the legislation, and let us build it so we can make more money in this province." It would be very, very difficult for the province to resist. That is the danger in this bill.

The minister's comments were useful, as I have noted, but I also want to talk a little more on background. Right now, under section 92 of the Ontario Energy Board Act, no one may construct a transmission or distribution line without OEB approval, which in most cases requires a public hearing and formal review. This approval under section 96 of the act must be given if the OEB believes the project is "in the public interest." That's the standard. That's our concern—not does this make the investors and Hydro One richer, but is it in the public interest?

Subsection 96(2) of the act defines the public interest as "the interests of consumers with respect to prices and the ... reliability and quality of electricity service." In some cases, the public interest may also be considered with respect to "the promotion of the use of renewable energy sources."

This bill allows the cabinet to bypass this public interest needs test by making an order declaring that a transmission line is needed as a priority project. If such a designation is made, Bill 112 says that the OEB "shall accept that the construction, expansion or reinforcement is needed when forming its opinion under section 96." This is an extraordinary power and an extraordinary removal of public oversight.

I want to talk about an example from recent history in Ontario that shows why you need to actually have a review of a business case for a project like this go before the Ontario Energy Board, and I'll talk about the smart meters. Some may have seen the 2014 annual report from the Office of the Auditor General. She did a very solid job of tracking the history of this project, noting how billions were spent with no savings realized, targets for reduction in peak demand not met and how the public interest was not served, whereas in other jurisdictions, people did look carefully at what was being done and did take a pass.

1010

The Auditor General writes, "The government announced smart metering in April 2004, and shortly thereafter the Minister of Energy issued a directive to the OEB under the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998. The directive required the OEB to develop an implementation plan to achieve the government's targets of 800,000 smart meter installations by 2007 and complete coverage for all residential and small business ratepayers by 2010." Not only was the Ontario Energy Board bypassed when it should have been doing an assessment, a business case

for whether or not smart meters made sense in Ontario, made sense for ratepayers, they became part of the planning process. Their ability to actually critically assess what was going on was removed—"No hearing, and you're now part of the implementation, not the regulation."

That, Speaker, was a very substantial problem. The ministry didn't complete any cost-benefit analysis or business case prior to making the decision to mandate the installation of smart meters. Zip, zero, nada—no business case before they engaged in a project that has cost \$2 billion. Other jurisdictions, including British Columbia, Germany, Britain and Australia, all assessed the cost-effectiveness and feasibility of their smart metering programs before they went forward.

In Germany, the government decided that in fact, for a small consumer, someone who's got a one- or two-bedroom house, it just didn't make sense. They didn't consume enough energy for the smart meter to pay for itself, as opposed to giving them a loan or a grant to upgrade their insulation, upgrade their windows, ensuring that they actually could consume less energy. Germany didn't do what we did. They didn't take on this massive debt. They are putting in some smart meters, but they're rolling them out where it makes economic sense. In Ontario, the Liberal government bypassed the Ontario Energy Board, didn't do the analysis, and so we got stuck.

There was a subsequent cost-benefit analysis done. The Auditor General writes, "After the government announced the rollout of smart metering in April 2004, the ministry" then—I'm adding the word "then"—"prepared a cost-benefit analysis of smart metering, and submitted it to cabinet in October 2005." This is after the instructions were given to get rolling. "However, the analysis was flawed; its projected net benefits of approximately \$600 million over 15 years were significantly overstated by at least \$512 million because it excluded an annual net increase in the projected operating costs of distribution companies." In other words, the net benefits should have been reflected as only \$88 million over 15 years.

There's a big difference between half a billion and \$80 million, and the people in our ridings, the people in your riding, are paying the cost of a decision that didn't involve the kind of business case analysis you need when you spend money to buy a house or buy a car. They didn't even do that.

This province has been stuck with this extraordinarily expensive system that the Auditor General says didn't deliver the goods. She noted that 77,000 ratepayers with smart meters paid set rather than time-of-use rates because they were paying money to some electricity retailer. Their consumption patterns were about the same as those on time-of-use rates. In other words, the impact of the smart meters was minimal.

Speaker, there's much more that I have to say. I've got a little time left. I know that we're coming to the end of this period this morning. I thank you for your indulgence.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'd like to thank the member from Toronto–Danforth. His entire presentation came toward me. Well done.

This House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm really excited to announce that members of Ontario's Hispanic community will be joining us for question period today: Mirtha Coronel; Dr. Felipe Gonzalez, who is the president of the Hispanic Pastors Association of Canada; Pastor Jose Arias and his wife, Pastor Deysi Arias; and Pastor Morena Monico.

Mr. Wayne Gates: It's with great pleasure and honour, actually, that I welcome my sister Irene Lowell to Queen's Park.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Following up with your suggestion from yesterday, I know that Jamie Lim from the Ontario Forest Industries Association will be here today, so we welcome her.

We also invite people to the reception tonight here in the building with the Ontario Forest Industries Association.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to welcome, from home, two wonderful people, John and Lou Cull. It's great to have you here today.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm very pleased to welcome my new constituency assistant, all the way from London, Matt Gilbert.

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Il me fait un grand plaisir d'avoir deux invitées aujourd'hui : M^{me} Andrée Myette et M^{me} Anick Tremblay. Je connais très bien les parents de M^{me} Myette, et je voudrais la présenter ici en Chambre. M^{me} Tremblay travaille pour moi. Donc, une grande bienvenue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup.

Further introductions? The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If you'll bear with me, I have several introductions. Of course, our page captain today is Jaleelah Ammar, and her mother, Marie, and brother Hasan are in the gallery joining us today.

I'm also happy to welcome Faces and Voices of Recovery, or FAVOR, to question period today. FAVOR Canada helps individuals who are struggling with addiction, and their families, connect to the right services and supports. Please join me as we help FAVOR celebrate and recognize September as Recovery Month.

I'd also like to introduce Paul Zimmerman, who is father to my extremely talented policy adviser—she wrote this, but she is extremely talented—Shannon Zimmerman. Welcome to question period.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: We had seven members of our party this morning at breakfast with the Ontario Forest Industries Association downtown. They're having a re-

ception this afternoon from 4 until 7, and I'd invite all members to join the forestry industry at their reception.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: On behalf of the Minister of Finance, Charles Sousa, the MPP from Mississauga South, it gives me great pleasure to introduce in the House today our page captain Duha Muhammad and her mother, Nora Hindy. She's here in our members' gallery. Welcome.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It gives me great pleasure to recognize my friend Craig Brockwell, and Carole from OECTA, in the gallery on this side. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome. Further introductions?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It gives me great pleasure to introduce special guests who are in your gallery, actually, because one of them needed accessibility: Amani Oakley and Neil Oakley, who are two lawyers, as well as Felicity Polera and Brian Pittana, who are here at Queen's Park to talk about the payments to injured people from doctors and the CMPA.

ORAL QUESTIONS

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. The Premier has failed to hold herself to the high standard expected from the Premier's office. The Premier has failed to hold the staff to the highest standard that Ontario deserves. Two thirds of Ontarians believe her deputy chief of staff, Pat Sorbara, should resign because of the alleged bribery.

Ms. Sorbara is on tape, telling Mr. Olivier that if he stepped down as the Sudbury candidate, the government would be very open to a job in the const office for him.

Sorbara also said, "Whether it's a full-time or"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sorry for the interruption. There are debates going on between both sides, and it needs to stop while the questions and the answers are being put.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Ms. Sorbara also said that "whether it's a full-time or a part-time job in a const office, whether it is appointments, supports or commissions," there are a lot of options.

Mr. Speaker, did the Premier instruct Pat Sorbara to offer Olivier an array of options?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Good morning, Mr. Speaker, and good morning to the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. We will be starting quickly with individuals. It stops.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I have said in this Legislature a number

of times, I have been open with the Legislature, I've been open with the media and I've been open with the public about the allegations related to the Sudbury by-election.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Just answer—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Renfrew, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have answered 102 questions on the subject in this House. I have addressed those questions in dozens of interactions with the media.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There is an issue that is now before the courts and we're going to let that process unfold as it should.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: The Premier has stated over and over again that there won't be criminal charges against Pat Sorbara. But frankly, that's nothing to celebrate, because the people of Ontario already know, and they've reached their own conclusions after listening to those tapes, after hearing Ms. Sorbara say, "You're being asked to do the ... favour I guess to make the sacrifice this time, and that also can go a long way, in terms of opening up options...."

Mr. Speaker, we'll stop asking the questions if the Premier actually says yes or no. Did the Premier instruct Pat Sorbara—yes or no—to ask Mr. Olivier to step aside for those options?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I did not ask for any comments when I asked you to be seated.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Just so that we're clear—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew and the member from Leeds–Grenville.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —Pat Sorbara's counsel informed her that she will not be facing any criminal charges. I understand that the Elections Ontario investigation is ongoing. We have co-operated with the investigation and we will continue to do that.

I would refer the Leader of the Opposition to Hansard between February 17 and April 2. I answered questions over and over again.

Mr. Steve Clark: Answer the question: Yes or no.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville is warned.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have answered questions 102 times. Again, I refer the Leader of the Opposition to between February 17 and April 2 of this year. Hansard is there, and he can see my comments.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I understand the seriousness of this situation, and I'm going to try to make sure that we get questions and answers put properly. For those who are trying to signal to others to continue to

make the House even more raucous, I will name you. I want this place to have those questions and answers done properly.

Final supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: If Pat Sorbara isn't being charged criminally, then there is no excuse for evading these questions.

We know the Premier called Andrew Olivier on December 11. We know Pat Sorbara called Andrew Olivier on December 12. We know that on December 10, Pat Sorbara called the deputy director of HR, in the Premier's office, responsible for public appointments.

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It's clear the Premier will not answer any questions in the House about her role in this scandal. Will the Premier at least confirm, if she is subpoenaed at a trial—if you're not going to answer here, will you answer at the trial of the criminal corruption of your office?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have answered questions in this House; I've answered questions in the media. I will continue to co-operate with authorities, as I have done. There is a matter before the courts and I'm not going to comment further on it, Mr. Speaker.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Of the many municipal resolutions passed with regard to the proposed sale of Hydro One, one reads as follows:

"Whereas in spite of widespread public concern about the impact on Ontario citizens of privatizing Hydro One, the government of Ontario will go ahead with the sale;

"Whereas residents of Ottawa depend on Hydro One for their supply of electricity, and there is a general public interest in retaining Hydro One as a publicly owned asset;

"Therefore be it resolved that the city of Ottawa express its concern to the Premier of Ontario and the Minister of Environment and Energy about the negative consequences of privatizing Hydro One;...."

The Minister of Energy supported this resolution in Ottawa as mayor in 2002. Can the minister explain why he's no longer prepared to stand up and fight for the people of Ottawa about their concern over this fire sale?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Energy?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Comparing the effort that the Progressive Conservatives did in 2002 to try to privatize Hydro One to what we're doing now is trying to compare a pig to an angel. The reality is, they did it illegally. They got shut down because they did it illegally. Secondly, they were doing 100% of it and 100% of control was be-

ing given away. It's absolutely different from what we're doing now.

What we're doing now is, we're doing it in a way that is responsible. We are doing it in a way that's protecting the public interest, and we're doing it in a way that will invest in infrastructure. Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: That government in 2002 was investing \$2 billion a year on average in infrastructure. We have been investing \$11.5 billion—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure the Minister of Energy believes his own answer, so let's go a little further.

The story doesn't end there. In fact, the resolution was also supported by the Attorney General, who was an Ottawa city councillor at the time.

To speak specifically to the resolution, it says: "Be it further resolved that the city of Ottawa urge the government of Ontario not to proceed with any further proposals relating to the sale of provincially owned electricity assets before there has been an opportunity"—and hear this—"an opportunity for a full and public debate on this issue, both in the Legislature and elsewhere;...."

We all know there's been no consultation outside the Legislature this time around. Can the Minister of Energy explain why previously he supported public consultation outside the Legislature and he doesn't today?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Energy?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I can't believe the words coming out of the mouth of the Leader of the Opposition. I want to re-create some words that came out of his mouth. Number one, "I generally believe the private sector can do a better job than the public sector. I ... think market conditions would be helpful for a lot of government agencies." And for the member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills: "We need to look seriously at privatizing the delivery of electricity."

His predecessor, Mr. Hudak, in effect adopted a policy, a white paper on the energy sector, Mr. Speaker. That white paper proposed broadening the ownership of Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One. Not only that, it said that they would rely on the Ontario Energy Board to protect rates.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Minister of Energy: Because I appreciate his words so much on this topic, I'll read further on in this resolution:

"Be it further resolved that the city of Ottawa urge the government of Ontario to conduct a broad public consultation process on the sale of provincially owned electricity assets, that this consultation process include the views of municipalities which depend on Hydro One for

the transmission of power, and that the results of this consultation process be made known to the public before the provincial government proceeds with any further plans...."

Well, Mr. Speaker, despite the pledge of the former mayor of Ottawa to include and engage municipalities, 166 municipalities have passed resolutions opposing the sale, largely because of a lack of public consultation. How can the Minister of Energy say "engage" and "consult" municipalities—and today say you don't care?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Speaker, if my government was trying to privatize Hydro One the way they were trying to privatize Hydro One, I would object too.

On the other hand, we have been very open, very transparent, in terms of what our agenda is. Again, I will say, we have made it very, very clear that we are going to repurpose our assets, including energy assets and Hydro One. Moving forward, we are going to do exactly that for the right reason. The reason is that every municipality across Canada is in an infrastructure deficit. Our Premier—with a 10-year program of \$130 billion, of which the proceeds will contribute, is a smart thing to do for our community, for quality of life and to keep our economy competitive.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The Premier has said that Mr. Loughheed "is not government or Liberal Party staff. He speaks for himself." But when Mr. Loughheed, in a recorded conversation, said, "I come to you on behalf of the Premier," there certainly seems to be more to the story.

This statement by the Premier is already on the public record, so there's no reason why she can't answer the question as to whether or not she still stands by that statement: that Mr. Loughheed wasn't acting on her instructions or the instructions of anybody else in her office.

My question to the Premier is: Does she still stand by that statement?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I will say, again, that I refer the leader of the third party to Hansard. I have answered 102—I guess it's, I don't know, 105 questions now on this issue. I will continue to co-operate with the authorities.

The fact is, this is a matter that is now before the courts, and I'm not going to comment further.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier said yesterday as well that she's answered all the questions that she's been asked by the opposition, but there have always been giant holes in her story, Speaker. The Premier says that Mr. Loughheed was a rogue operative, but the tapes of conversations with Mr. Loughheed and the Premier's deputy chief of staff tell a story of backroom Liberal conver-

sations that involved the Premier and the member for Sudbury.

Does this Premier still stand by her statement that Mr. Lougheed was not acting on her instructions or the instructions of anybody else in her office?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There is a process that is taking place outside of this place. This is a matter now that is before the courts, and I'm not going to comment further.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: If we look back through political history, we see time and time again that it isn't the crime that gets the politician in trouble, it's the cover-up. The Premier didn't used to be so shy about absolving herself of any responsibility, but now that she might be sworn in before a judge, she doesn't seem so sure anymore.

The Premier shouldn't have to hide behind the courts to tell the people of Ontario that nothing her office did was illegal. Will the Premier tell Ontarians that nothing she or members of her staff did was against the law, or is she worried that this would be proven to be untrue in a court of law?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Although I'm not asking for this, I just want to caution about the word usage. I know that it was in a general sense, but it was close, so I just remind the member.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.
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Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, Speaker, I'm going to remind the leader of the third party—in fact, all members in this House—not to solicit members in the Legislature to interfere in a judicial proceeding. Now, I know the leader of the third party takes offence at me telling her what the rules are, but these are constitutional rules, and we should abide by them. I refer her to a Supreme Court decision from 1997, the *Tobiass* case, and this is what the Supreme Court noted in that decision: “A well-known rule of parliamentary practice holds that no member of the House of Commons should comment upon any matter that is pending before the courts.”

She may not take my word for it. She should take the advice of the Supreme Court of Canada, and should not interfere in a matter which is pending before the courts.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. The Premier promised Ontarians that the process of selling off Hydro One would be “transparent, professional and independently validated.” Yet, they've removed all oversight of the process and refused to provide any evidence whatsoever that the sale will actually benefit Ontarians.

Hon. Brad Duguid: That's not true at all. Stop making things up.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Economic Development.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It was bad enough that the Premier wasn't up front about her plan to sell off Hydro One with the public, but now she's refusing to be transparent, refusing to be professional and refusing the independent validation that she had promised Ontarians.

Will this Premier actually be transparent and allow for public consultations and an independent review of the sell-off of Hydro One before the first tranche is sold?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think it's very important to be clear about how we are broadening the ownership of Hydro One and the transparency and oversight that we put in place, so I just want to go through that, Mr. Speaker. This plan was included in our 2014 budget and the 2014 platform. The advisory council issued an interim report and a final report. Both were publicly available. We held a technical briefing for both opposition parties and the media. To further ensure transparency, we brought in Denis Desautels, who's a former AG of Canada, to oversee the IPO.

The member opposite knows that publicly traded companies are subject to different oversight rules and mechanisms than crown corporations and that Hydro One will be regulated by the Ontario Business Corporations Act, the Ontario Securities Act and the Ontario Energy Board. So there are protections in place in terms of oversight, and we have provided for transparency.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This Premier, in this chamber, promised to be open and transparent, but not only do we have the same old Liberal behaviour, this Premier has taken arrogance to new heights in the province of Ontario. The Attorney General, the Ombudsman, the Information and Privacy Commissioner, and the five other independent officers of the Legislature all criticized the sell-off of Hydro One because the Premier has removed the sale from public scrutiny. This is an unprecedented action by Ontarians' watchdogs, and it's been completely ignored by this arrogant Premier.

Will the Premier allow for public consultations and an independent review of the sell-off of Hydro One before the first tranche goes on to the market?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I know that the leader of the third party actually knows that there are different mechanisms in place for the new Hydro One company, because it's a different kind of company.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It will be regulated differently. It will continue to be regulated by the Ontario Energy Board, but it will also be regulated by the Ontario Business Corporations Act and the Ontario Securities Act. They will have to file information with the Ontario Securities Commission and they will have to disclose information in accordance with that. But as I say, the Ontario Energy Board will continue to have oversight and will approve electricity rates.

So the leader of the third party, I know, is not happy with this move. But the leader of the third party has absolutely no plan. She has put forward no proposals for how she would build the infrastructure that we are building as a result of taking this action and others. We know that every municipality, every community in this province needs infrastructure building. That's why we're moving on this.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier of this province should not have to cover the sale of Hydro One behind such a veil of secrecy. If she believes that the sell-off will benefit Ontario families and businesses, then she should be comfortable giving Ontarians the transparency that she had promised them. But since the Premier has removed all independent oversight, it's not surprising that the people of Ontario are fearful that they're getting a raw deal with this sale.

Whether it's the Sudbury bribery scandal or the sell-off of Hydro One, it seems that this Premier does all of her governing in a Liberal backroom away from public scrutiny.

Will this Premier do the right thing and allow for public consultation or an independent review of the sell-off of Hydro One before it's sold?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've gone through the measures we took to be clear with the people of Ontario that we were going to be looking at assets and that we were going to be repurposing assets in order to be able to invest in infrastructure—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please finish.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, apparently what we said and did was clear enough that even the leader of the third party understood what was being contemplated. On July 9, 2014, she said, "The budget says in black and white that the government is looking at the sale of assets, 'including ... crown corporations, such as Ontario Power Generation, Hydro One and the Liquor Control Board of Ontario.'"

She knew that there was a continuum of possibilities that we were looking at—and that is exactly what we did. We looked at possibilities, and we made a decision. In fact, the leader of the third party ran on the fiscal plan that we had put forward.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Todd Smith: My question is for the Minister of Energy. In the House and in committee yesterday, the minister stated repeatedly that the government would retain control over Hydro One. However, when the minister was asked about Ontario jobs that could be lost to overseas companies due to the Hydro One sale, his answer was that he couldn't speculate on what the new board at Hydro One or the future boards at Hydro One would do.

So when Ontarians are worried about rate hikes, the minister will brag about how much control the province has, but when he's pressed about potential job losses, suddenly the board has all the control at Hydro One. Either the minister has the control to save these people's jobs from executives who have a history of offshoring jobs to other countries, or he doesn't have the control that he keeps telling the House and committee that he has. Why is he trying to have it both ways?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The government has taken the necessary steps to ensure that Hydro One jobs remain here in Ontario. While Hydro One will operate like any other public company, reporting to its board of directors and shareholders, as part of budget 2014, our government amended the Electricity Act to ensure that head office, control centres and the operation of transmission and distribution systems remain right here in Ontario.

The infrastructure investment that has become possible as a result of broadening ownership will support 110,000 jobs per year right here in the province, with projects such as roads, bridges, transit systems, schools and hospitals across the province. In addition, Bill 112, which I understand that party is going to support, perhaps with some amendments, gives additional power to the Ontario Energy Board to protect the interests of the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: Minister, that's a bogus answer and you know it. What has happened in other jurisdictions where the CEO has come in is that he has cleaned out the headquarters. Sure, the shell remains; it's a skeleton crew that remains at that headquarters building while IT jobs are shipped overseas.

The Hydro One sale terminates the province's offshoring agreement, which protects the jobs of hundreds of people at energy in London, in Markham and right here in Toronto. Before the sale is even closed, the province's directive that their jobs must stay in Ontario is history. It's gone. That's hundreds of good middle-class jobs on the block because this government can't sell Hydro One fast enough.

Why is the government in such a hurry to let Hydro One's new high-priced executives, making \$4 million a year in compensation, move a bunch of good-paying, middle-class jobs out of this province, possibly even to other countries?

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Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I really want to focus on his words saying that it's so much in a hurry. In 2013, we made it very, very clear before the election that we were going to repurpose assets. There was a good reason for that. It's because there is an asset infrastructure deficit across the country. It's about \$120 billion.

In Ontario, this Premier is going to solve that problem with a 10-year program, \$130 billion, and the repurposing of Hydro One with billions of dollars that will be invested in infrastructure. That's billions of dollars that will not come from borrowing, that will not come from taxes,

that will not come from reducing programs. It's responsible fiscal management and I support it 100%.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question, through you, Speaker, is to the Premier.

When you read the transcripts of both Sorbara and Lougheed, it is pretty clear that there are conversations going on within the Premier's office about how to approach Mr. Olivier in regard to getting him to step down from running as a candidate. Mr. Lougheed is clear, Mrs. Sorbara is clear, and you're implicated in regard to what they have to say about what happened.

So here's the question: Can you confirm, yes or no, that you're involved in this particular issue and you're actually the one who ordered these people to go and make the approach to Mr. Olivier and ask him to step down?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, the member for Timmins–James Bay can try every which way to interfere in a court proceeding. We're not going to engage in that unconstitutional practice. As I mentioned earlier, the Supreme Court has noted that there is a parliamentary practice not to speak to matters that are pending before the courts. Let me quote the Honourable Marc Rosenberg from his academic article entitled "The Attorney General and the Prosecution Function on the Twenty-First Century." This is what he said:

"The parameters of independence in the prosecution function are also firmly established, and have achieved the status of a constitutional convention..."

"As Professor Edwards said, 'It is now well recognized that any practice savouring of political pressure, either by the executive or Parliament, being brought to bear upon the law officers when engaged in reaching a decision in any particular case, is unconstitutional and is to be avoided at all costs.'"

I urge the member to avoid this unconstitutional urge to offer Mr.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Again, Mr. Speaker, through you to the Premier: It is pretty clear that Mrs. Sorbara said that the Premier didn't want Mr. Olivier to think that he was in Glenn's shadow, so she turned around and offered Mr. Olivier whatever it is that he would most want to do, just like Mr. Lougheed had done before that. We know that the Premier, Mrs. Sorbara, Mr. Lougheed and the member from Sudbury were all making plans behind the scenes. The recordings say that too. To me, this was a co-ordinated plan executed from out of the Premier's office.

My question to the Premier is this: Who gave the order to offer Mr. Olivier a bribe?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I find it ironic the opposition often accuses the government of not answering the question and here, they're not listening to the answer and still continuing on with their prepared notes and urging the members of this House to break a constitutional convention.

Once again, this matter is before the courts. We're not going to engage in trying to answer questions. This is not a court of law. This matter has to be decided by the judge and these issues will come there.

Let me just also refer you to what Justice Linden said in the Ipperwash Inquiry:

"Governments should not be allowed to influence specific law enforcement decisions or specific operational decisions of the police. These decisions are legitimately within the scope of police expertise and discretion. Government intervention in these areas risks both the appearance and reality of partisan or inappropriate political influences affecting the administration of justice and the rule of law."

I once again urge the members opposite not to ask these questions because they're unconstitutional.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. Arthur Potts: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Ontarians across the province continue to advocate for greater support for low- and middle-income earners. Minimum wage earners in my community of Beaches–East York are working hard to provide for their needs each and every day and they want to continue to be able to do so. But minimum wage earners are particularly hard hit by inflationary pressures in Ontario and they are trying to keep up.

Now, I know that many of my constituents were pleased with the increase in the minimum wage to \$11 in 2014 and others have argued for immediate increases to even \$15. But I understand that there will be changes to Ontario's minimum wage very shortly, based on the very predictable changes we introduced last year.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister please give us an update on any changes that are coming to the minimum wage in Ontario?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member for that excellent question. You will know that before we came into power the minimum wage was frozen in this province at \$6.85 for eight long years. We knew we could do better than that. As the member knows, I was proud to announce last year that we took the politics out of determining Ontario's minimum wage and we did this by annually tying that minimum wage increase to the rate of inflation.

The first increase following this legislation comes into effect tomorrow, Thursday, October 1. The general minimum wage will increase in this province from \$11 to \$11.25, making it the highest minimum wage of any province in this country. The minimum wage for students, for liquor servers, hunting and fishing guides and home workers will also increase. This is the ninth minimum wage increase since 2003 and it is part of our plan to make sure we have a fair society in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Arthur Potts: This is of course extremely good news for all of Ontario and I want to say that I'm extremely proud of the work that this minister is doing in

order to balance the different interests between employers and employees. He's striking the right balance and we should all be supportive of that.

I'm also particularly proud of the work that our government has done, the hard work for those communities and those individuals who work very hard for themselves and their families, because these increases to the minimum wage do impact Ontarians across the province and will assist them in more ways than one.

As the minister mentioned, I remember when the minimum wage was stuck at \$6.85 for over eight years. I was a consultant in labour relations back in those days and we've come a long way since then. Thursday, the change will represent a 64% increase since those days, and some are still calling for additional change.

Through you to the minister, Speaker: How was this method of increasing the minimum wage arrived at and what makes it such a preferable method for going forward?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, my thanks again to the member for the question.

We've heard from experts, we've heard from workers, we've heard from business. They want stable and predictable increases to the minimum wage in this province. We've had recommendations from the Minimum Wage Advisory Panel and they advised the government on the best approach: to tie future minimum wage increases to inflation. And that's exactly what we've done.

What that means is that each and every year, our government will announce the new minimum wage on April 1. Businesses then have six months to prepare for that, for the new minimum wage which comes into effect on October 1, the same as it's doing this year. By doing this, we're helping the vulnerable workers in our society cope with increases in their own cost of living but we're providing predictability for Ontario businesses to plan for those payroll changes and ensuring we still have a strong economy in this province.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Minister of Energy.

Minister, despite massive public opposition to your plan to sell Hydro One, you seem unwilling to change your direction and provide Ontarians with the information they have every right to. Your government claims to be open and transparent, but the way you've conducted this sell-off of the crown jewel of our electricity system has shown that your words are empty and hollow.

Minister, you're nearing Damascus. You still have a chance to redeem yourself. Will you commit to the people of Ontario, the actual owners of Hydro One, to hold off on this fire sale so that they can thoroughly examine this deal and render their judgment at the ballot box?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: First of all, they did render their judgment at the ballot box. We won the last election on the basis of repurposing our assets.

In terms of information, the opposition, the public, in fact, has been provided a 320-page prospectus that sets out more detail than anybody has ever seen with respect to Hydro One.

We actually are going through estimates, where every dollar that's been spent in the ministry is under review and analysis by the opposition. Much of that has to do with the preparation and lead-up to the Hydro One project. Ed Clark, chair of the assets committee, has made himself available for extensive media interviews and answered all the questions five or six times in the minutest detail.

We have been sharing information. People knew that it was part of our agenda, and we're implementing a mandate that we have.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, for the minister to imply that they received a mandate to sell Hydro One in the 2014 election shows just how hopelessly arrogant this government has become.

Minister, the only reason you're going to sell Hydro One on the auction block is because the Premier has maxed out the provincial credit cards and she can't pay for infrastructure the way that every other Premier before her paid for infrastructure. That's why the people of Ontario universally—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Finish, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's why the people of Ontario universally oppose their plan to sell Hydro One. It does not pass the smell test. If it did, they would have campaigned vigorously on it during the 2014 general election, but they didn't because they knew it would be a bad deal for Ontario ratepayers.

Minister, if you're not willing to hold off on this fire sale, will you at least heed the call of our leader and the opposition and release all the reports and financial analysis to justify your dismantling of this vital public asset?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member mentions the level of spending for infrastructure. I indicated in an earlier answer that that government averaged \$2 billion per year investment in infrastructure over the last three or four years of their term. We have been investing \$11.5 billion.

When it comes to the electricity sector, they left us with a deficit of electricity. They left us with a deficit, a declining amount of generation and transmission, and we had to invest \$34 billion to fix the mess they left us with.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is for the Premier. Today, there's a media report that suggests this government has another SAMS outsourced computer problem on its hands. You'll recall the SAMS program sent out

incorrect social service payment amounts, or none at all, disrupting thousands of Ontarians' lives, people who badly need the assistance. You'll also recall, Mr. Speaker, that the minister responsible referred to the problem as a "small glitch," and the Premier likened the fix to booting your BlackBerry, an astonishing answer.

Today, we learned that a computer formatting error prevented the province from collecting sales tax on used car sales last May, resulting in lost revenue of over \$2 million.

An outside service provider that the government outsourced failed again. Is this government's appetite for privatizing government services so great that it can continue to make these costly mistakes?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question.

Unfortunately, there was an error that was created and, as a result, unreported taxes occurred and certain individuals didn't pay their fair share. Some Ontarians prior to the error did pay their full share—certainly thereafter they did. As a result, we've taken measures to inform those who were affected. We're going to have a number of individuals who are going to be available to them directly, and we've already taken the necessary steps to correct it so it doesn't happen again.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Again to the Premier: Already the minister responsible is saying he has full confidence in the private services sector and that this was an isolated incident. Meanwhile, anyone who in good faith purchased a used vehicle last May is now left on the hook. How many of these so-called isolated incidents does the public need to suffer from this government?

Will this government demand accountability from its friends in the private sector, or will the government again put its head in the sand? Does this government have a new excuse for what went wrong here, or will the minister's excuse be a gently used one?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Government Services.

Hon. David Orazietti: We're obviously aware of the issue, and we have worked to correct that immediately.

The member opposite is referencing third-party providers. The reality is that the Ontario government doesn't determine the value of used vehicles in the province of Ontario. That's determined by industry and industry standards. We get that information on the value of these vehicles in terms of what we're supposed to be charging for tax for used vehicles in the province of Ontario. That information is given to us through industry. It's provided to the Ministry of Finance. There's an assessment made and that is entered into the computer database so that when individuals come in to purchase vehicles, register them, we are ensuring that they are paying the appropriate tax. This has not been a problem in the past; it was a problem for a brief period during the month of May. It was corrected immediately. We're reaching out, to resolve this issue, to residents.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: My question is for the minister responsible for women's issues. Earlier this week, the Canadian Securities Administrators released a report on the number of women on the boards of TSX-listed corporations and in senior executive roles. They found that while we have seen some progress on this important matter since January, companies are still underutilizing the significant talent of women.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please update the House on the measures the Women's Directorate is taking to promote female leadership in the private sector?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member from Ottawa—Orléans because it's an important question. She's done tremendous work herself on boards and in the private sector, so I know she realizes the immense value of having women on corporate boards. Thank you for that.

As I think we all know, last December Ontario became the first Canadian jurisdiction to introduce comply-or-explain regulations for companies listed on the TSX. We did this to ensure that women are adequately represented in the executive suite.

We also know that this is very good for business. Companies without women on boards are missing out on a significant part of the talent pool.

Research tells us as well that gender diversity in corporate leadership is linked to improved governance and stronger performance on both financial and non-financial measures.

Just yesterday, I was so pleased to hear the CIBC announcing their own targets to increase women on their boards. That's fantastic news.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: J'aimerais remercier la ministre pour cette réponse.

Minister, Monday's report found that only 14% of companies on the Toronto Stock Exchange have adopted a formal policy for improving their proportion of women on boards. Out of the 772 companies, 65% decided to not adopt a written diversity policy. The remaining 21% either have an unwritten policy or disclose a general policy without provisions that relate to women. As a woman, a former businesswoman and someone who sat on numerous boards, I found this very troubling.

Minister, I also know that just yesterday, there was a round table to discuss progress on the representation of women on boards, held by the Ontario Securities Commission.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister outline the current approach that our government is taking to ensure positive change with respect to women on boards?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Minister of Finance, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you to the minister responsible for women's issues and the member from Ottawa—Orléans for their leadership.

We appreciate Monday's report from the Canadian Securities Administrators and the leadership of the On-

tario Securities Commission with respect to yesterday's round table.

We know that more work needs to be done to enhance equality in corporate boards. Ontario, in fact, is the first jurisdiction to develop the comply-or-explain regulation, and several other provinces have followed our lead since its introduction in December 2014. It's because of this approach that we finally have better information on the number of women in corporate board positions, which will help us create policies to promote equality.

Our government is proud of the transparency this brings to corporate boardrooms, and we look forward to tracking further progress through future annual reports.

We know that a diversity and gender-equality increase in boards and in senior positions of management is not only good for our economy, it's best for the companies as well.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the energy minister. Nowhere have the effects of your unaffordable energy policy been felt more than northern Ontario. Our winters are longer and colder, and those who rely on electric heat are now paying hundreds of dollars more per month in order to stay warm. In some cases, northerners are paying more for their hydro bill than for their mortgage. For some, it's literally a choice of whether to heat or eat. Now, the Hydro One sale threatens to force those unaffordable hydro rates even higher.

How can this government, with any measure of conscience, be willing to force even more northerners into energy poverty?

1120

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member knows that Hydro One cannot raise its own rates. He, like the third party, has been crossing the province saying that rates are going to skyrocket because of the broadening of ownership of Hydro One. The Ontario Energy Board controls rates. We've gone over that over and over again.

Last week, the Supreme Court of Canada confirmed the extent of power that the Ontario Energy Board has over rates. The rates are controlled for every LDC—for every utility—including Hydro One, Ontario Power Generation, Union Gas and Enbridge. The whole sector is controlled. The Supreme Court was very, very clear. The Supreme Court upheld the right of the Ontario Energy Board to ensure consumers pay just and reasonable rates for electricity, even if that means challenging Ontario Power Generation or any other utility on expenditures like collective bargaining labour agreements.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Nothing the minister just said helps address the problem. His words are cold comfort to northerners struggling to keep the lights on because of this government's disastrous energy policy.

Municipal councils all over the North, including several in my riding, have passed resolutions opposing the Hydro One sale. The news we revealed yesterday that

this government lost \$61 million on the Ontera sale gives northerners no confidence that this government can be trusted with the Hydro One sale.

Speaker, will the minister disclose all of the reports and financial analysis used to justify the Hydro One sale and provide proof it won't send the hydro rates of northerners any higher?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: In a previous answer I indicated those areas where there's been full disclosure and information provided. I refer to the mandate that this government has to repurpose assets, including the energy agencies.

There are programs for northern Ontario energy support, including the Northern Ontario Energy Credit. I wonder how many times the member has referred his constituents to that program. There's also very significant support—and northern Ontario on the industrial sector has among the lowest rates in North America.

Ontario is in the middle of the pack in North American jurisdictions in terms of energy prices. Higher jurisdictions rates include Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Florida, Massachusetts—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Prince Edward Island—and their 13 million residents?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Your time is up, and the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is warned.

New question.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier. On September 19, OLG locked out 1,000 workers across the province who are represented by Unifor. Workers at slots in Sudbury Downs as well as workers at Woodbine and in Brantford have been locked out. They have been negotiating with OLG to make sure that they get the pensions they paid for.

As this government moves ahead with more privatization, this time at OLG instead of Hydro, what these workers want is simple: They want to know that the pensions that they've been paying into for so long will be protected, the pensions that provide, in the Premier's own words, "a secure and predictable income in retirement."

Mr. Speaker, I want to know the same thing from the Premier: Why is your government allowing an attack on these Unifor workers' existing pensions as you move ahead with more reckless privatization schemes?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question.

OLG respects the collective bargaining process. Of course we did endeavour to treat all employees fairly and respectfully. As can be appreciated, the OLG modernization is a complex transformation. Both the government and OLG are focused on getting it right in order to benefit all Ontarians. We require that the new service providers keep the employees for a period of 12 months at their

current locations and current positions and at the same rate of pay.

OLG is also requiring the service providers to continue to provide the same pension and benefits and also provide a registered pension plan for eligible employees after the 12-month period. OLG is prepared to go back to the bargaining table. We want to make certain, and remain hopeful, that all outstanding issues will be resolved as soon as possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Gates: To the member: OLG locked them out; let's be clear on that.

This Premier talks a good game about supporting unions and the importance of pensions, but under her watch, we have seen nothing but disrespect for the pensions of hard-working Ontarians.

We are now seeing the same thing coming out of OLG—a refusal to recognize that these workers deserve to be treated fairly. This is after the Premier said, “The reward for a lifetime of hard work should not be poverty in your golden years.”

This lockout is having a devastating impact on these 1,000 families and their communities. When is the Premier going to step up and ensure that the OLG honours its pension obligations and doesn't try to sell its workers down the river with reckless privatizing schemes?

Laughter.

Mr. Wayne Gates: And I don't believe this is funny.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you, Minister?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member for that excellent question. Ontario, as he will know, has an excellent record of dispute resolution. Negotiations by their nature are tough, but in Ontario, 90% of all agreements are reached without either strike or lockout.

We encourage the employer in this case and the union, Unifor, to make every effort to resolve their differences at the bargaining table. We're confident still that by working together, the parties can reach a settlement, including the issues that the member has raised.

Speaker, the Ministry of Labour has a mediator involved in this issue. He's going to remain available to assist the parties at the bargaining table with the hopes of achieving a resolution to these issues right at the bargaining table, where they belong.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. Ontario was, in many ways, built by the forest industry. Many heritage buildings in my riding of Cambridge were built from local pine and oak stands.

The sector continues to play a key role in Ontario's economy. In fact, MNR employs fire rangers to protect Ontario's forests. Forestry supports 170,000 working families across Ontario and contributes \$11 billion to Ontario's economy each year.

I know that the forestry industry was one of the industries hardest hit by the recession and that since then, the forestry industry has been working to transform their operations to continue to meet the needs of an ever-evolving market.

Through you, Speaker: Can the minister please explain what his ministry is doing to support our Ontario forestry industry?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member for the question. She's right that in 2005-06, this particular industry was hammered by a series of variables that really did bring the industry to its knees for quite some time. In my home city of Thunder Bay, five or six mills right within the municipal boundary closed that had been long-time contributors to the economy of Thunder Bay, both pulp and papermills and sawmills.

There is some positive news now. The industry is coming back. We're harvesting about three million more cubic metres of fibre than we were some time ago, although it is still an industry that I would say is very much challenged.

Over the span of that last eight or 10 years, we have done a great deal to support the industry. I would reference one example—and only one—in the time allotted to me in the first question, where we have provided this year up to \$60 million of funding for roads programs in the province of Ontario for the forest industry. That brings that total to over \$600 million—just one program of support that we have brought forward for this particular initiative.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Thank you, Minister, for your answer and your work on this file.

In the minister's mandate letter from the Premier, the minister was tasked with working with the forest industry, First Nations communities and other partners to ensure that crown forest resources are being put to their best use in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable fashion.

Ontario ranks among the leaders in the world on sustainable forest management, and approximately 80% of Ontario's forests are certified, which means that customers can have confidence that Ontario wood products meet third-party ecological, economic and social standards. This is important to Cherry Forest Products in Puslinch; near my community of Cambridge, which employs over 100 people.

Speaker, could the minister please explain what his ministry is doing to help promote Ontario forest products both inside and outside our province?

1130

Hon. Bill Mauro: This is an important and timely question, and I very much want to thank the member for raising it.

When our industry is challenged in regard to how they are harvesting forests in the province of Ontario, the industry is not only being challenged but, in fact, the government of Ontario is being challenged. If they're saying that industry is not harvesting sustainably, they're

saying that they're breaking the laws that exist in the province of Ontario.

We have regulation and legislation in the province of Ontario that is very significant. In fact, we would say that we are a world leader when it comes to how we harvest our forests here in the province of Ontario. Almost 80% of the forests in Ontario are third-party certified. We are a leader when it comes to that.

Along with my colleague Minister Lessard in Quebec, and others across the country, we are working with the customer base in New York City, Vancouver, Minneapolis and other jurisdictions to ensure that the customer base is aware of how sustainably we're managing and harvesting our forests here in the province of Ontario.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the minister responsible for seniors. In May 2002, there was a member who stood in this Legislature and said, "I want to remind the Premier today to hold on to this precious public resource, for once it has gone back to private hands, the public will never get it back. It is my call to the Premier not to privatize Hydro One...."

Could the minister tell us who said that and whether, for the sake of Ontario's seniors, he still believes it?

Hon. Mario Sergio: This is a good question.

Let me give the facts: In 2002, we were addressing a particular issue raised in the House by former Premier McGuinty with respect to the sale, by the PC government, of 100% of Ontario Hydro, which would have meant another 407-style sale. I was speaking against that entire motion.

What we are trying to do today is completely different than what the PC government was willing to do in 2002: selling a fire sale of Ontario Hydro. This is totally different, and I was referring exactly to that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Back to the minister for seniors: The minister didn't stop there; he repeated his statement in a press release. He called the sale of Hydro One a "grave mistake."

Today, the minister will speak on the International Day of Older Persons. If he wanted to show seniors he cared, he would stand by his statements about Hydro One. Instead, the Liberals' policies mean that seniors will have to choose between heating and eating.

When will this minister apologize to Ontario seniors?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Thank goodness, Speaker, that because of our efforts working from the opposition, the then government of Ontario, the PC government, did not go through with the sale of Hydro —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Two arguments going on on both sides is not helpful and it'll stop.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Thank goodness we didn't go through with the sale of Hydro the way they wanted to, otherwise it would have been another 99 years of a 407-style sale, which today we are paying for through our nose.

What we are planning to do today is completely different than what the PC government was doing in 2002. I was speaking in opposition to what they wanted to do: selling Hydro completely without reservation or concern for the people of Ontario. This is what I was speaking about. I was speaking on behalf of all the people of Ontario; I was speaking on behalf of the seniors of Ontario—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

New question.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the members for their advice. I'll take care of the House.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. Experts and community leaders are sounding the alarm that recent changes to the Partner Assault Response Program made without any meaningful consultation are putting women and children at risk. These changes run counter to the 2009 report of the Domestic Violence Advisory Council, which recommended that PAR be strengthened, not watered down.

Will the Premier stop ignoring the advice of experts and community leaders? Will she place a moratorium on any further cuts to PAR, and instead start listening to the voices of survivors, PAR providers, community service agencies and criminal justice professionals in reviewing the PAR Program?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, let me say that the funding for the program has not been changed, and it has not been reduced. Our government is really, really determined to seriously address domestic violence. The Partner Assault Response Program is one part of our response to domestic violence. It provides court-mandated group education and counselling services for domestic violence offenders.

What has changed is that now it's a 12-session model, which allows the program to serve an additional 2,200 offenders per year, which is an increase in program capacity of more than 22%. This amendment has been made after wide consultation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: The 2009 report of the Domestic Violence Advisory Council, which I mentioned earlier, also recommends that PAR include differentiated responses to intervention, instead of a one-size-fits-all. This would help screen out violent offenders who shouldn't be

in the program, and it would also provide access to abusers who voluntarily want to change.

Why did the government choose to completely ignore the advice that was received in 2009 from experts and community leaders about ensuring that PAR would be an essential part of a coordinated and integrated response to violence against women?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: To the minister responsible for women's issues.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: As the Attorney General mentioned, domestic violence is a very serious problem in Ontario, and the PAR Program is a component of our coordinated response to domestic violence. I take this issue very seriously as the Ontario minister responsible for women's issues, and I want to highlight a number of initiatives that this government has implemented since 2004 to raise awareness of domestic violence and strengthen supports for the victims.

Most recently, as we all know, we adopted a permanent round table on sexual violence, assault and harassment. We have all sectors of domestic violence and sexual violence at that table, helping to guide the Sexual Violence Action Plan. We've also had a number of other specific initiatives related to domestic violence, around public education, training for front-line professionals, an employment training program for abused women and at-risk women, and a language interpreter program service.

TAMARA POMANSKI

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Etobicoke North on a point of order.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Respectfully, Speaker, I would like to invite all members of the House to join with me in saying farewell, goodbye and good luck to one of our very able table officers. Tamara Pomanski has ably served this Legislature for many years. She is leaving—I believe this week—for Winnipeg. She has helped me in my responsibilities as Chair of justice policy. I think we are now both veterans of almost a hundred meetings, and today, I believe, is her last day sitting at the table in the Legislature of Ontario.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Even though that's not actually a point of order, we really do welcome that. Congratulations on behalf of all of us, and we thank all our staff for the great work that they do.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Finance on a point of order.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I just want to take the opportunity to congratulate our page captain today, Duha Muhammad, who is here today with her mother, Nora Hindy, witnessing. Thank you very much, Nora.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes, therefore this House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1140 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to introduce Elizabeth Venditti, who's in the gallery. She's from Carleton Place. I've had the opportunity to meet with her on a number of occasions. She has brought a petition today with regard to regulations on oral and maxillofacial surgeons to be read in by one of my colleagues here today. I'd just like to welcome her to the Legislature and congratulate her.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

JOHN D. BRADLEY

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's with a heavy heart that I rise today to offer my condolences and prayers to the family and friends of John D. Bradley, a trailblazer, if there ever was one, who left a lasting legacy on our whole region.

John grew up on a family farm in Dover and was an active citizen in the Chatham-Kent community for his entire life. John served his country proudly during World War II and continued to serve his community when he returned home. He basically built most of northeast Chatham. Projects such as the Thames Lea mall, the Wheels Inn, the development of the Birdland subdivision, Thames Towers, the Union Gas building, the Country Kitchen restaurant and the Holiday Inn are all part of his legacy.

John never gave up on Chatham. He saw an opportunity where others saw a loss. John and his two brothers developed the Wheels Inn out of the old Progressive Welders factory. That's a long time ago, Speaker. I might add, I grew up right around that area, and I remember it very, very well. In operation for 37 years, the facility was extensively expanded to include the Wheels Fitness and Racquet Club, the Wheels Country Spa, the Wheels Bowling Centre and the Wild Zone amusement park.

While passionate about business, John was perhaps even more passionate about his community. In 1990, he founded the Chatham Kent Community Foundation, which now gives hundreds of thousands of dollars to local charities. He's a strong supporter of Ducks Unlimited, following in the footsteps of his father Bruce when it came to wildlife conservation. And to show how much he meant to the municipality, they named the John D. Bradley Convention Centre in his honour.

His proud and honest spirit embodied, he will never be forgotten. He was a man who did all he could to build a community, in every sense. Chatham-Kent will surely miss one of its favourites.

Thank you, Speaker, for allowing me to continue with this. I appreciate that.

MARTY GERVAIS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, because of a bend in the river, the city of Detroit is actually due north of the city of Windsor. I know it's hard for some folks to

picture that, but my friend Marty Gervais is Windsor's Poet Laureate, and here's his poem Upside Down:

It's not a happy face
this shoreline of ours,
maybe it's because
we're upside down
looking north instead of south
like the rest of the country
maybe we haven't learned
to smile so readily—
our weakness betrayed
in that frown
I heard this first
From the nuns in Riverside
At the school two blocks
South of the river
And with my buddies,
We'd slip down
Past the heavy sewer grates
And wend our way
Underground
down to the shoreline
soaken ankles, wet shoes and pant legs
and emerge wide-eyed
to Detroit's dark smoke-rising signals
that blackened the blue sky
We were a band of boys pretending
to be Tecumseh or Simon Girty
or John Wayne or Gene Autry
The nuns in Riverside
Said we were
The upside down people
So we did our crazy cartwheels
along the solitary riverbank
saluting the Americans to the north

Speaker, Marty has invited five other Poets Laureate to a special reading event at Willistead Manor in Windsor on the 12th of November—save the date. I invite all members of the Legislature to join us, to see the value in my private member's bill to create the position of Poet Laureate for Ontario.

JANE STREET HUB

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak about the Jane Street Hub in my riding of York South—Weston, which celebrated its fifth anniversary just this past week.

This project has been funded by the government of Ontario and United Way Toronto, and has now become an integral part of the community. It is a one-stop centre for health and social services, which benefits residents of the Weston, Mount Dennis and Trethewey neighbourhoods and surrounding areas.

As an MPP, it is sometimes hard to see a project from start to finish. It has been my pleasure to be part of the Jane Street Hub project since its initial stages, from

drawings to development of operations and, now, to a flourishing hub where six different community organizations have partnered together. Those include Unison Health and Community Services, Macaulay Child Development Centre, Midaynta Community Services, North York Community House and Yorktown Child and Family Centre. These non-profit organizations provide a wide range of invaluable services to those in need, and they are all under this one roof for the benefit and convenience of our community.

The hub also provides space available for community meetings, including the use of a kitchen that residents' groups, non-profit organizations and others utilize.

I'm very proud to have the Jane Street Hub located in York South—Weston.

BEAR CONTROL

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Communities in Nipissing are continuing to struggle with the problem of nuisance bears. They note that there continues to be a large number of human encounters annually, which tie up police resources and personnel, costing local taxpayers significant dollars.

Municipalities know that MNR is currently assessing the success of the spring bear hunt pilot project, established in eight locations in the north. But they also note that the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters advises that the annual hunt is a successful wildlife management tool that minimizes human encounters and brings \$40 million in economic activity to Ontario.

The city of North Bay and the township of Chisholm passed resolutions this summer asking that the annual spring bear hunt be reinstated permanently and be allowed to continue during the province's review of the two-year pilot project.

I can tell you about my own personal experiences with bears coming onto my property in Corbeil. In fact, Patty and I just saw another bear while driving to a ratepayers' meeting a couple of Fridays ago.

To the minister I say this: You know that northerners know what the solution to this problem is. We've always known. It's time to listen.

HEROES

Mr. Michael Mantha: There are heroes among us, Mr. Speaker.

Hero Ian Bos lost his father, Ted Bos, after a fight with cancer. On May 21, 2015, Ian embarked on a cross-country walk in memory of his father and in honour of the excellent care his father received. His walk is to raise awareness of end-of-life care and stimulate the difficult discussion for palliative care societies across Canada.

His message is simple: Support hospice palliative care in your community.

I walked 26 kilometres with this gentleman. We talked about family, dreams, his family, his dreams and the need for proper guardrails across the country—Ian knows what I'm talking about.

This man is walking across Canada: Ian's Walk for End of Life Care. Look it up. That's a hero.

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario awarded Mindemoya general practitioner Dr. Andrew Stadnyk with the 2014 Outstanding Physician Award. With over 20,000 doctors in Ontario, only four doctors receive this significant award.

In a humble hero's reply, he said, "I just find it a little awkward when there are so many other doctors across the island and province who are more deserving."

Dr. Stadnyk, along with his superhero sidekick Dr. Nick Jeeves, saved what has now been a thriving hospital in Mindemoya, and they have mentored a team of health care professionals who are all heroes in my book.

Dr. Stadnyk, you are hero to so many.

Sometimes heroes must remain anonymous, but like any caped crusader who swoops in to save the day, the township of Assiginack has a super local garden hero who donated an entire harvest to the local food bank. A truck and trailer filled with locally grown produce is greatly appreciated by area families in need.

Thank you, Assiginack super local garden hero, whoever you are. You saved the day.

THINK OUTSIDE THE CAR

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I rise in the House today because it's time for all of us to "Think Outside the Car," and my riding of Burlington is embracing this opportunity. Our mayor, Rick Goldring, has launched a social media campaign to promote alternative transportation this fall, to help facilitate a greener, healthier and less congested Burlington.

1510

In my riding, 90% of all trips are made by car. In 2011, 50% of daily trips in Burlington were five kilometres or less. That's slightly higher than the national average of 40% of all trips, and it's only a 20-minute bike ride.

The city of Burlington's Think Outside the Car Challenge began on September 15, shortly after students returned to school, and will run until October 30. In fact, the launch event was held at a high school in my riding, M.M. Robinson. Many of the students at M.M. walk or ride their bikes to school, and they are led and encouraged by their very enthusiastic teacher, Geoff Sheppard.

We know that approximately 40% of urban air pollution is generated by the transportation sector and that obesity is a rising problem in our province. Alternative transit like cycling, walking or public transit reduces air pollution, improves physical health and helps to build a more safe and connected community.

As a regular GO train commuter and cyclist, I think outside the car because it gives me a chance to see my community from a different perspective, helps me to stay active and also makes economic sense.

Speaker, I'd like to challenge all the members of this House and their constituents to think outside the car and to share their #ThinkOutsidetheCar moment on social

media. To participate in the challenge, please visit the city of Burlington website, or follow the hashtag #ThinkOutsidetheCar on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

REFERENDA

Mr. Randy Hillier: Referendums have a long history throughout this country and our province. Some of the biggest questions facing our nation have been determined by referring the matter to a referendum, such as the conscription crisis of 1942, the referendum to repeal Prohibition, and the Charlottetown accord.

Referendums are a necessary tool that complements our democracy and empowers citizens by giving them the opportunity to influence public policies directly. We have also seen referenda used recently in Ontario for both de-amalgamations and proportional representation.

Referenda are always at the prerogative of the government, not at the behest of the people. If all governments were responsive and respectful of people, there would never be a need for either democracy or referenda. However, sometimes majority governments attempt to steam-roll legislation through and, in the process, stifle public opinion and influence. This has become all too familiar here in our assembly. The sale of Hydro One is but the most recent example.

Today I'll be introducing my private member's bill, the Referendum Act, which will allow the people of Ontario to trigger a referendum via a petition, and mandate the government to hold a referendum on these important policies.

Referenda would be a great step forward in empowering citizens and enhancing our democracy here in Ontario. I encourage all members to support the Referendum Act.

BREAD AND ROSES CO-OP HOMES

Ms. Daiene Vernile: This past weekend I had the pleasure of helping mark the 25th anniversary of the Bread and Roses housing co-operative in Kitchener. This is a very unique not-for-profit, mixed-income community. It's situated in a heritage building in downtown Kitchener, and it's just down the street from my constituency office.

Launched in 1990, the co-op consists of 66 apartments in two adjacent buildings. The heritage building has 21 apartments, and the six-storey high-rise includes the remaining 45.

What makes this residence very unique is the rent: It's affordable, in downtown Kitchener. The people who live there promote collective responsibility and well-being. Everyone pitches in, sharing their skills as they govern themselves through collective decision-making and the handling of their finances. There is a special focus on diversity and respect among neighbours. The residents are also concerned with their impact on the environment, as they try to minimize their environmental footprint wherever possible.

The story behind the name “Bread and Roses” is rooted in a 1920s union song sung by textile workers who were rallying support for better working conditions and wages. The line “give us bread, but give us roses” was the inspiration for the founding board. They believed passionately that residents needed affordable housing with a very strong sense of community.

I congratulate them on creating such a unique, affordable and healthy place to live, and I enjoy having them as neighbours.

UNITED ACHIEVERS' CLUB OF BRAMPTON

Ms. Harinder Malhi: Today I rise to recognize the 17 high school students in the Peel region who recently received a United Achievers' Club Scholarship. On September 19, the United Achievers' Club of Brampton held their 31st Annual Scholarship and Recognition Awards dinner. This annual event recognizes students with black or Caribbean heritage who have a strong academic record and have been accepted to pursue post-secondary studies at a registered college or university.

Thirty-one years ago, the United Achievers' Club of Brampton presented its first \$250 scholarship to a graduating student from Brampton. In the three decades since, a total of 334 students have been awarded scholarships totalling nearly \$337,000.

In addition to academics, the students claim a variety of interests and talents, as well as strong community involvement.

Established in 1980, the United Achievers' Club of Brampton also recognizes members and community workers who have made significant contributions to the growth and development of the organization.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the United Achievers' Club of Brampton for the leadership they provide to youth in my community and their 35 years of promoting the culture and achievements of Canadians of black and Caribbean heritage.

I also wish to commend this year's scholarship award recipients on their achievements to date. I am grateful for this recognition you have received and for all you will contribute in the coming years to make our province an even better place to live.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TRANSPARENCY IN GOVERNMENT BILLS ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE DES PROJETS DE LOI ÉMANANT DU GOUVERNEMENT

Mr. Harris moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 125, An Act respecting government bills / Projet de loi 125, Loi concernant les projets de loi émanant du gouvernement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Michael Harris: Today I introduce the Transparency in Government Bills Act, 2015.

This act requires certain information to be tabled in the assembly when a government bill is introduced. The information must include, among other things, a statement describing the problem that the bill seeks to address, a description of the public policy goals that the bill seeks to achieve, and a summary of the financial cost the bill would have on the government, municipalities, the public and any affected industries or businesses.

REFERENDUM ACT, 2015

LOI RÉFÉRENDAIRE DE 2015

Mr. Hillier moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 126, An Act to provide for citizen-initiated referenda to require the introduction of legislation / Projet de loi 126, Loi prévoyant le dépôt obligatoire de textes législatifs par suite de la tenue de référendums à l'initiative des citoyens.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, I won't read the complete explanatory note, but I will read from it.

This bill, the Referendum Act, 2015, enacts a new act that provides a process by which a person who is eligible to vote in an election of members of the Legislative Assembly, called a “registered voter” in the act, can initiate a province-wide referendum on a question that falls within the constitutional competence of the assembly.

A registered voter can apply to the Chief Electoral Officer at any time for the issuance of a petition, except if the officer has previously issued a petition with respect to that question that, in the officer's opinion, is of the same manner. A proponent of a petition has 60 days to return the petition to the Chief Electoral Officer with the signatures of persons who, on the day of the issuance of the petition, are registered voters and who represent, for at least 10 electoral districts, at least 25% of the total number of registered voters who voted in the previous election. In that case, a writ is issued requiring that a referendum be held on the referendum question.

If at least 50% of the valid referendum ballots cast in a referendum indicate a yes answer to the question, the government is required to take steps as soon as reasonably possible to implement the result. Those steps consist

of ensuring that the Lieutenant Governor in Council or a member of the council makes a regulation, if it is legally possible to implement, or otherwise introducing legislation.

1520

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member, because that is what we are required and requested to do, and that is to read from the explanatory notes or condense them if it's longer. I appreciate the member doing so.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SENIOR CITIZENS

Hon. Mario Sergio: I rise today to recognize October 1 as International Day of Older Persons and National Seniors Day. Today is a day to celebrate Ontario's seniors and everything they do for our great province.

Ontario's seniors are mentally and physically active. Many volunteer, and some are still working and contributing to the overall well-being of the province. Seniors also have a wealth of knowledge and experience to pass on to our younger generations. Their expertise is vital to helping our province compete and succeed.

Internationally, the population of those over the age of 60 is expected to reach 1.4 billion by the year 2030. In Canada, seniors account for a record-high 14.8% of our population, and the number is rising. Today in Ontario, we know there are over 2.1 million seniors, a number that already accounts for a larger share of our population than kids under the age of 15.

Speaker, these numbers highlight a trend seen around the world: Older adults, particularly those in Ontario, are living longer, healthier lives than before.

Even though our seniors are very capable, older persons do have a dynamic set of needs. That's why our government created Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors. This plan has three fundamental principles, the first of which is to help seniors access the best health care.

For example, earlier this year we announced our continued investment in research through the Ontario Brain Institute. This investment will foster greater understanding about diagnosis and treatment of Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, ALS and other neurodegenerative diseases, and could also lead to quicker diagnosis and better care. This investment will help improve the lives of all of those living with these diseases, including older Ontarians.

Our government is equally committed to strengthening home and community care. We know that people prefer to receive care at home and in their communities, where they can be closer to loved ones, living as independently as possible. That's why in May we released Patients First: A Roadmap to Strengthen Home and Community Care, which lays out the 10 steps that our government is

taking to modernize the home and community care system.

The second principle of this plan is to ensure that seniors are living safely. As an example, we have implemented the Retirement Homes Act, 2010, which enforces new care and safety standards to keep retirement home residents safe.

Third, we believe it's important that seniors live in inclusive, welcoming communities. We launched our \$2-million Seniors Community Grant Program and our \$1.5-million Age-Friendly Community Planning Grant program to support socially inclusive environments for seniors, helping seniors to remain connected and engaged as they age.

A few weeks ago, I came across a report that showed Canada is the fifth-best place to age. Speaker, Ontario can do better. Our goal is to make Ontario the best place to grow old, and it's up to all of us to accomplish this.

Throughout the year, but particularly today, I ask you all to join me in recognizing seniors around the world and, even more, seniors in this province. Honour them for their wisdom, their hard work and their lifetime of contributions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I am pleased to rise today in celebration of the International Day of Older Persons. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the International Day of Older Persons, which was designated by the United Nations General Assembly. Every year, October 1 is a day for us to come together to celebrate the accomplishments of our province's seniors and to raise awareness about the issues that they face.

Speaker, I am not only a senior, I also have the privilege of representing seniors in this Legislature. I always enjoy connecting with other seniors and hearing their stories. They have seen so much change throughout their lifetimes and can offer very insightful feedback on today's issues. In Perth-Wellington, I have frequent opportunities to celebrate our seniors. Last year, on National Seniors Day, I was able to visit four retirement and long-term-care homes in Perth-Wellington. I shared meals with residents, participated in an exercise class and attended a social hour.

This year, I will be in Mount Forest attending a mayoral proclamation of National Seniors Day and visiting with local seniors. I would like to make special mention of the residents of Cedarcroft Place Retirement Residence, who, I believe, are in Stratford watching us today. Every year I get to attend the All Seniors Care Seniors Games, and I'm always so impressed. They hold friendly competitions and activities like Wii bowling, Wii golf, bocce, shuffleboard, and card and board games. The games are an excellent way to stay active in mind and body.

The theme of this year's International Day of Older Persons is "Sustainability and Age Inclusiveness in the Urban Environment." According to the UN, six out of every 10 people in the world are expected to reside in

urban areas by 2030. This phenomenon means the number of older persons in urban areas is also increasing. I strongly agree that we must ensure that seniors have access to accessible housing and inclusive activities close to home.

However, I would like to take a moment to share the issues that face many seniors in our rural and small-town communities. I frequently hear from seniors in Perth-Wellington who are concerned about access to transportation. Train service to Stratford and St. Marys has been cut in recent years, and some of our communities have no public transit at all. This is a serious issue for seniors who have to travel to visit family and friends, to do their shopping and to attend medical appointments.

Access to long-term care is another serious issue in our rural communities. I have been informed that there is a great deal of concern that many of our long-term-care beds may be transferred to larger cities. People who have lived their lives in a community like Mitchell or Palmerston should not have to leave their hometown in order to have access to the care they need.

On that note, health care is another area where this government must do more for seniors. In Perth-Wellington, we have had a number of doctors recently retire, leaving many people without access to a family physician. The government's solution was to send everyone to the hospital's emergency room for routine issues like prescription refills. Our seniors have worked hard all their lives. They deserve access to a trusted family physician close to home, not a government telling them to sit in an ER for hours on end.

While we have made great strides in expanding opportunities for seniors, there's obviously still much to improve on. Currently, more than 1.8 million seniors live in Ontario. This is projected to more than double by 2036. It's so important that, as our population ages, we address the challenges and difficulties of aging at home, and transitioning to assisted living.

I will continue to be a strong voice for seniors in this Legislature and represent the issues that are important to them. I will also continue to advocate for organizations which provide essential services to seniors, organizations like the Alzheimer Society of Perth County, the Local Community Food Centre, the Maple Lane residents' committee and countless others. These organizations rely on funding to provide certain seniors' programs, and I urge the government to commit to stable, long-term funding for these invaluable community resources.

Tomorrow, let's all take the time to celebrate the seniors in our lives, who have contributed so much to this province. To all of my fellow seniors, happy International Day of Older Persons.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further responses?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It is my honour today to rise on the occasion of International Day of Older Persons, which has been celebrated every October 1 since 1990. Some background on this: On December 14, 1990, the United Nations General Assembly designated October 1 the International Day of Older Persons. This was

preceded by initiatives such as the Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing, which was adopted in 1982 by the UN General Assembly; and later, by the United Nations Principles for Older Persons, passed in 1991.

1530

I am happy to be speaking on this important day on behalf of the Ontario New Democrat caucus.

Mr. Speaker, older adults are an essential part of our diverse and beautiful province. They are parents, grandparents, friends and our neighbours. They contribute economically and socially to the fabric of Ontario.

In my own riding of London-Fanshawe, there are programs in place specifically for older adults, whether they are social gatherings or sporting events. In 2010, the city of London became the first city in Canada to join the World Health Organization's global network for age-friendly cities. The World Health Organization defines an age-friendly city as an inclusive and accessible urban environment that promotes active aging. After extensive community consultations, a review of activities that the city already had planned and a review of what was missing in the programs specifically for older persons, the city of London launched the three-year age-friendly action plan. This plan included 37 strategies and 133 steps of action in respect to outdoor spaces, social participation, community support, health services and many more. I am proud to come from a city that looks after older people to make sure that they have the services they need.

Mr. Speaker, the theme this year for International Day of Older Persons is "Sustainability and Age Inclusiveness in the Urban Environment." In the spirit of this year's theme, I want to bring up three important issues that I have heard from older persons across this province and in London.

The first is the fire sale of Hydro One. As older people are beginning to think about retirement, settling down and spending more time with family, the last thing they should be thinking of is if they need to make ends meet. The plan of this government to privatize Hydro One would hike up rates across Ontario and make it more difficult for those on a fixed income to pay the bills.

The second is health care and increasing costs of prescription drugs. As people get older, their health becomes a much larger concern, and it's imperative that they have the services they need. According to numbers from the Ontario Medical Association, there are over 800,000 people in the province who do not have a family doctor, and over 140,000 new patients entering our health care system every year, yet the Liberal government has cut 50 residency spots. We should be making sure that our aging population has the health care they need and deserve.

Finally, there is the issue of home care and long-term care. Older adults should be able to live in dignity in their home and be able to spend time with family and loved ones. Provinces across this country are beginning to invest in home care to ensure that our seniors and older adults are being looked after. Yesterday the Globe and

Mail reported that there are more seniors over the age of 65 in Canada than there are children under 15. This is a milestone in Canadian history, but also shows the need for home care and palliative care strategies in this province. The article also pointed out that there is a skyrocketing rate of people living with Alzheimer's, showing the need for a dementia strategy to help with that pressing issue as well.

In fact, 10 years ago, the government of British Columbia created a Premier's Council on Aging and Seniors' Issues in order to address the challenges and opportunities presented by our growing seniors' population.

I think it's time this government started taking the concerns of our older adults, seniors, seriously.

In conclusion, on the International Day of Older Persons, let's ensure that our aging population is being respected and appreciated for the vital contributions that they've made to our province.

PETITIONS

CURRICULUM

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have yet another petition on the sex ed component of the health and physical education curriculum. Mr. Speaker, this has now been signed by well over 200,000 people across the province of Ontario. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas in 2010 the Ontario Liberal government promised to consult with voters before implementing a revised sex education curriculum which many parents felt was age-inappropriate and too explicit; and

"Whereas since 2010 the Ontario public has not been given adequate opportunity to provide feedback on proposed sex education changes; and

"Whereas in late October 2014 the Ontario Liberal government announced that more revisions to the sex education curriculum would be implemented in time for the next school year; and

"Whereas the announced plans to consult only one hand-picked parent per school does not constitute broad public feedback on the curriculum, and therefore, the Ontario Liberal government are breaking its 2010 promise to consult the people of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Repeal the sex education component of the health and physical education curriculum planned for September 2015 and start over with a meaningful parental consultation process that actually gets buy-in from parents" across the province.

I affix my name to this petition.

DENTAL CARE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands and thousands of adults live with pain and infection because they cannot afford dental care;

"Whereas the promised \$45-million dental fund under the Poverty Reduction Strategy excluded impoverished adults;

"Whereas the programs were designed with rigid criteria so that most of the people in need do not qualify; and

"Whereas desperately needed dental care money went unspent and was diverted to other areas even though people are still suffering without access to dental care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly do all in its power to stop the dental fund being diverted to support other programs; and

"That the Legislative Assembly fully utilize the commissioned funding to provide dental care to those in need."

I couldn't agree more. I'm going to sign it and give it to Anna to be delivered to the desk.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas the Canada health act states that 'continued access to quality health care without financial or other barriers will be critical to maintaining and improving the health and well-being of Canadians';

"Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada that does not allow oral and maxillofacial surgeons (OMFS) to refer their patients for magnetic resonance imaging (MRIs) and other diagnostic imaging;

"Whereas the practice of OMFS using an intermediary (e.g. family physician) to refer their patients for MRI and other diagnostic imaging and for patient consults with other specialists adds costs to the health care system without adding value, creates unnecessary inconveniences for patients and delays diagnosis, treatment and access to medically necessary care;

"Whereas the practice of OMFS using an intermediary (e.g. family physician) to refer patients for MRIs and other diagnostic imaging and for patient consults with other specialists compromises patient care by: delaying diagnosis and treatment; wastes the time of patients by forcing them to run around unnecessarily; contributes to the burden of work for physicians and OMFS and prolongs the pain and suffering of patients;

"Whereas the lack of a family physician could act as a barrier for patients seeking care, treatment and requiring referrals for MRIs, diagnostic imaging or to other specialists;

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's (MOHLTC) action plan promises ensuring that the health system has the health human resources to deliver quality and efficient care including exploring expanding scope of practice and regulations for providers;

"Whereas the average wait time for an MRI in Ontario is 84 days; having to go from OMFS to an intermediary for a referral adds on a longer wait time for patients of OMFS;

"Whereas quality and efficient health care is not delivered when patients have to see a number of health care professionals to get referrals for diagnostic procedures, imaging or referrals to other specialists;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation to allow oral and maxillofacial surgeons in Ontario to refer their patients for magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and other diagnostic imaging and to refer their patients to specialists so as to not penalize patients seeking access to care and treatment."

I support the petition and I give it to page Grace.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I love those short ones.

The member from Nipissing.

LAKE NIPISSING WALLEYE FISHERY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry has stated that the walleye population in Lake Nipissing is in decline; and

"Whereas their answer is to manage through the recreational fishing regulations; and

"Whereas that is not a viable solution if the commercial fishery on Lake Nipissing is not regulated; and

"Whereas the Lake Nipissing Stakeholders Association wants to restock the lake at large volumes to replenish the waning walleye population, but is not being allowed to do so by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry despite the fact the ministry commits to stocking 1,200 other" lakes "in Ontario each and every year;

1540

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to allow the Lake Nipissing Stakeholders Association to restock Lake Nipissing with walleye to protect our local fishery for future generations."

I support this, sign my name and give it to page Nuh.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Michael Mantha: On behalf of the great residents of Blind River who have collected this:

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas quality care for the 77,000 residents of long-term-care (LTC) homes is a priority for many" Ontarians;

"Whereas over the last 10 years 50% of Ontario's hospital-based complex continuing care beds have been closed by the provincial government; and, there has been a 29.7% increase in the acuity level of LTC residents and 73% of LTC residents in Ontario suffer from some form of Alzheimer's or dementia;

"Whereas the provincial government does not provide adequate funding to ensure care and staffing levels in long-term-care homes keeps pace with residents' increasing acuity and a growing number of residents with complex behaviours such as dementia and Alzheimer's;

"Whereas there is extensive evidence that a care standard can result in increased staff levels, which translates into improved quality of care for residents;

"Whereas for over a decade several Ontario coroner's inquests into nursing deaths have recommended an increase in direct hands-on care for residents and increase in staffing levels;

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government first promised a legislated care standard for residents in the province's long-term-care homes in 2003 but in 2013" and on "they have yet to make good on their promise;

"Whereas the Long-Term Care Homes Act (2007) empowers the provincial government to create a minimum standard—but falls short of actually creating one;

"Whereas the most detailed and reputable study of minimum care standards recommends 4.1 hours of direct care per day; and

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) An amendment must be made to the Long-Term Care Homes Act (2007) for a legislated care standard of a minimum four hours per resident each day adjusted for acuity level and case mix;

"(2) The province must increase funding in order for long-term-care homes to achieve a staffing and care standard and tie public funding for homes to the provision of quality care and staffing levels that meet the legislated minimum care standard of four hours;

"(3) To ensure accountability the province must make public reporting of staffing levels at each Ontario LTC home mandatory;

"(4) The province must immediately provide funding for specialized facilities for persons with cognitive impairment who have been assessed as potentially aggressive, and staff them with sufficient numbers of appropriately trained workers;

"(5) The province must stop closing complex continuing care beds and alternative-level-of-care beds to end the downloading of hospital patients with complex medical conditions to long-term-care homes."

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition, Mr. Speaker, and provide it to page Jacob to bring it down to the Clerks' table.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I think we're going to change the rules around here for the length of petitions.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I have a short petition here addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It's entitled "Fluoridate All Ontario Drinking Water" and it reads as follows:

"Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

"Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

"Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

"Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario."

I'm pleased to sign and to support this petition, signed by many members of the community in my hometown of Mississauga, and to send it down with page Matthew.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you for the short one.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition from the towns of Huntsville and Bracebridge signed by hundreds of people in support of the hospitals. It reads:

"Whereas the provision of a full range of core hospital services, including acute care in-patient, emergency, diagnostic and surgical services, at both the Huntsville District Memorial Hospital and the South Muskoka Memorial Hospital in Bracebridge by Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare (MAHC) is vital for all of the communities in the entire MAHC catchment area, including Algonquin Provincial Park; and

"Whereas the continued delivery of those core hospital services at both the South Muskoka Memorial Hospital in Bracebridge and the Huntsville District Memorial Hospital is crucial to the long-term sustainability and economic vitality of the two communities and the entire MAHC catchment area, including Algonquin Provincial Park; and

"Whereas the residents of Huntsville, Bracebridge and the other communities in the MAHC catchment area have strongly supported multi-site delivery of a full range of

core hospital services, including acute care in-patient, emergency, diagnostic and surgical services, at both the South Muskoka Memorial Hospital in Bracebridge and the Huntsville District Memorial Hospital; and

"Whereas, contrary to the wishes of the people of the entire MAHC catchment area, the board of directors of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare has approved the 'one-hospital model' as the preferred model for hospital service delivery in the future;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) That the province of Ontario ensure that a full range of core hospital services, including acute care in-patient, emergency, diagnostic and surgical services, are maintained on a multi-site basis at both the Huntsville District Memorial Hospital and the South Muskoka Memorial Hospital in Bracebridge;

"(2) That the province of Ontario ensure that the changes to Ontario's health care delivery system currently being implemented do not negatively impact access to services and the quality of care in Bracebridge, Huntsville and the entire MAHC catchment area, including Algonquin Provincial Park;

"(3) That the province of Ontario ensure that the changes to Ontario's health care delivery system currently being implemented recognize the unique and important role that smaller hospitals, such as the Huntsville District Memorial Hospital and the South Muskoka Memorial Hospital have in promoting economic development and creating sustainable communities in Ontario."

I support this petition and have signed it.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Wayne Gates: "Privatizing Hydro One: Another wrong choice.

"Whereas once you privatize hydro, there's no return; and

"We'll lose billions" of dollars "in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

"We'll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

"We'll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what's happened elsewhere;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come."

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Todd Smith: This is on behalf of residents in the Marmora area who want to protect their prime agricultural farmland.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture has protected class 3 agricultural land from development for the purposes of projects under the Green Energy Act; and

"Whereas the United Nations has declared the vital importance soil plays in human civilization and protection of this vital resource; and

"Whereas the solar energy facility, SunEdison Cordova Solar Project, planned for Ledge Road, Clemenger Road and Twin Sister Road, in the municipality of Marmora and Lake will occupy agricultural land that has previously been protected against development under the Green Energy Act;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs take the necessary steps to ensure that projects, including the SunEdison Cordova Solar Project, that are on protected agricultural land are protected from large-scale, industrial energy development."

I agree with this petition, will sign it and send it to the table with page Angelica.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The time for petitions is over.

OPPOSITION DAY

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Patrick Brown: I move that the government provide the House, and therefore the public, with all reports and financial analysis used by them to justify the sale of Hydro One no later than October 8, 2015.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Brown has moved opposition day number 2. Mr. Brown.

1550

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, the public does not support this fire sale. Two thirds of Ontarians, according to a number of polls, have said categorically that this is not in the best interest. Ontario has among the highest energy rates in North America, and they're expected to rise by 42% from 2013 to 2018, further crippling businesses and placing a huge financial burden on families trying to get by.

Ontario families, under the Liberal watch, are paying more than \$1,000 more. Rates have tripled because of their bad energy policy. Given the overwhelming public opposition, will the government hear the voices, hear the public that is speaking so loudly against this bad deal, against these decisions being made behind closed doors, or will they continue to keep the people of Ontario in the dark?

The Ontario Energy Association, in their recent polling, also reported that 78% of Ontarians are demanding assurances from the government that the fire sale will not increase their electricity bills, because they have the same concern that everyone else does: that electricity prices are going to rise. Apparently that's not enough for

the government to pause. It's not enough that seniors living on fixed incomes are choosing between putting food on the table and keeping the power on. These out-of-control electricity rates in Ontario will make the winter even harder and even more precarious for seniors living on fixed incomes.

What's more, here we have seniors struggling to keep up with their bills, to manage to make ends meet, and at the same time this government has the audacity to give out executive compensation packages of \$24 million, \$4 million for the CEO alone—almost 10 times the price of the hydro CEO in Quebec. It's out of control.

Where are the government's priorities? When Ontarians are struggling to make ends meet, these outrageous compensation packages that this government is allowing are alarming. Frankly, it's a slap in the face to the people of Ontario.

Last week we highlighted how Dalton McGuinty believed selling off Hydro One was a bad idea. I'd like to read some of the quotes the former Liberal Premier made—by the way, the same Liberal that our current Premier refers to as "boss."

Dalton McGuinty said, "Selling off [Hydro One] is a bad idea.... It's a quick fix, and it's a bad one."

"[W]hen you turn a natural public monopoly over to the private sector, it is the consumer who ultimately pays the price. Rates would go up. Rates could in fact go up dramatically and there is nothing consumers could do...." I would hope the Liberals would actually listen to their mentor Dalton McGuinty.

He also said, "Selling off this valuable public asset is something the public should" always "be consulted with ... let them have their say."

He's not the only Liberal who believes there should be public consultation in regard to the sale of a public asset. The Minister of Energy, who, when he was mayor of Ottawa in 2002, passed a motion—by the way, the Attorney General also supported that motion as a city councillor—demanding that government have public consultation.

The exact words used by the city councillor, now the Attorney General, and the mayor, now the Minister of Energy, were, "widespread public concern about the impact on Ontario citizens of privatizing Hydro One...."

"Whereas residents of Ottawa depend on Hydro One for their supply of electricity, and there is a general public interest in retaining Hydro One as a publicly owned asset; ... " It's alarming that their perspectives on this could change so quickly.

The resolution expresses the concerns they have for Ottawa. That's not all. It actually urges "the government of Ontario not to proceed with any further proposals relating to the sale of provincially owned electricity assets before there has been an opportunity for a full public debate."

This morning I asked the Minister of Energy to explain why he is no longer prepared to fight for the people of Ottawa in their opposition to the Hydro One fire sale, why he no longer believes the people of Ottawa

should have their voices heard with this fire sale and why he no longer believes municipalities should have a say in this fire sale of Hydro One.

I would note that it's not just Liberal Premiers and Liberal ministers who have concerns. The mayor of Sarnia spoke on behalf of 166 municipalities who have passed similar resolutions to the one that Ottawa did. The resolution was quite unequivocal. Municipalities are concerned how this is going to affect energy prices across the province of Ontario. But beyond a former Liberal Premier, beyond Liberal cabinet ministers questioning the judgment of this government, the independent officers of the Legislature wrote a historic letter just a few months ago asking the Premier to reverse this plan because she has taken away all oversight powers.

In addition to the request of the independent officers, the Financial Accountability Officer requested access to information and was refused. It's incredible. This government promised to be different. They promised transparency. They promised accountability. If that's the case, then why are they refusing to share this information? I would hope—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Because you have your head down and turned away—I still hear you, member from Barrie.

Continue.

Mr. Patrick Brown: The government promised to be different. We had hoped that the government would be different. We had hoped that when they said they believed in transparency and accountability, they meant it. If the government has any shred of decency, if they hope to protect the promise that there would be some form of transparency, they would support this motion—they would support the opposition motion—because the people of Ontario are demanding it. If they choose not to support our motion, they are showing that they really aren't in it for the people of Ontario.

The prospectus released last week does not provide background information, and nothing to determine the valuation or to justify executive salaries that have been disclosed. Rising electricity rates hinder the ability for businesses to compete and have a level playing field to create jobs, retain jobs and recruit jobs from around the world.

Whether knocking on doors in the recent by-election in Simcoe North or in my travels across Ontario, I hear again and again that businesses are struggling to keep jobs in Ontario because of this reckless energy policy. This year, Goodyear halted its multi-million dollar plant expansion in Napanee. Cascades, a paper-making company with a long history of doing business in Ontario, have their newest plant in Niagara Falls, but it's Niagara Falls, New York, not Niagara Falls, Ontario. One of the biggest reasons is power prices.

The Liberals seem to have forgotten to respect the opinions of Ontarians. Twelve years ago, they said that the opinions of Ontarians mattered, but all of a sudden today they don't matter, municipalities don't matter, the

opinions of their own cabinet ministers don't matter. Let me be very clear about this: No one in Ontario believes—not for a second—that the government has a mandate for the fire sale of Hydro One, no matter how many times they say it. You can say a misrepresentation a hundred times; it's still a misrepresentation. Mr. Speaker, will the Liberals—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'll remind the member that he doesn't use the word “misrepresentation.” You will withdraw that.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Withdrawn.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, will the Liberals come clean and involve the people of Ontario in this conversation about the sale of their public utility that they, their parents and grandparents built with their hard-earned tax dollars over the past century?

If the Liberal government won't listen to their own members, just recently, the Toronto Star wrote an article. Normally I don't quote the Toronto Star, but the Toronto Star wrote an article the other day that said many Liberals are concerned about this fire sale. Many Liberals in the caucus are concerned. We have quotes from Liberal ministers. We have quotes from a former Liberal Premier. Municipalities are up in arms. If that's not good enough, listen to the overwhelming population in Ontario that wants the government to do the honourable thing: to correct course, to disclose, to be transparent, to be accountable. I implore the government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: On behalf of my NDP colleagues and the people of Timiskaming—Cochrane and across the province, I'm honoured to be able to speak today on the issue of providing documents to the public before the sale of Hydro One. Several times we have heard the Premier in this House say, “We are broadening ownership.” My colleague from Oshawa brought up a point today that was very pertinent. She said, “How can it get much broader than all of the people of the province owning it?” By privatizing, you are not broadening ownership; you are concentrating ownership into companies' hands.

1600

People in my part of the world have gotten lots of experience with high hydro bills, and that's why they're so concerned. Many people across the province, particularly in northern Ontario, have no option but to heat with hydro. It's cold comfort to them when they say, “OEB will protect you,” or, “We've hired our own internal ombudsman,” because when the billing problems with Hydro One started to surface, one of the only things that saved the people of rural Ontario from some of those crazy bills was the Ombudsman. Now with this privatization scheme, the first thing they do, before they sell a share, is say, “We won't let the Ombudsman get involved any longer.” Again, they talk about transparency and they talk about open government, but their actions are exactly the opposite.

Another example: In the North, we recently dealt with a Liberal privatization scheme when they tried to divest,

fire-sale, the ONTC. I remember that they told us at the time, "The government is going to save \$265 million, give or take, by divesting"—another word for broadening—"the ownership of the ONTC." But then a nasty little report from the Auditor General said that, actually, it would cost the government \$800 million. So due to the people of northern Ontario and the Auditor General, the government put the brakes on. You'd think they would have learned. Do you know what, Speaker? The government did learn something from that fiasco: "The next time we try to privatize something, we are going to take the Auditor General out of the picture because she's very troublesome." That, again, is the exact opposite of openness and transparency.

If the government believes this is such a great idea, they should be very willing to show that proof. They shouldn't try to block out the Auditor General, try to block out—not "try"; they've succeeded. The most self-proclaimed open and transparent government in recent history—the first thing they do, in the most major policy change in a quarter century, is block out the independent officers of the Legislature, the people who actually work on behalf of the Legislature, not the government. It's an insult to the people of Ontario, particularly to the Auditor General.

Do you know why, Speaker, it's so important that the people see the information before the government is allowed to make this major—in our opinion—policy mistake? Again, we'll turn back to the example from the ONTC. The government decided to keep four of the lines and sell one. They decided to sell Ontera, but, again, this wasn't done in full public view. We have learned just now, out of public accounts, that, actually, for the \$6 million that they netted, they spent \$6.5 million on consultant fees, on advice on how to sell Ontera. Again, if those had been identified earlier, maybe the rest of us could have helped them make some better decisions. It's very, very troublesome; it's disastrous when you see those figures after.

So what happens in a year, two years from now, when we see in public accounts that, "Oops, we thought we were going to net \$5 billion and use that on infrastructure, but we forgot about this"—they'll use much nicer words, Mr. Speaker—"and we only netted \$2 billion. That \$500 million that we used to get in dividends from Hydro One, well, we don't get that anymore."

I'd like to close my portion with: We hear from the government that they need to sell Hydro One to pay for infrastructure. Often, the Premier and the ministers have a whole list of all the infrastructure things—their \$130-billion list. What they say they are going to net, after they pay off the debt of Hydro One, I believe, is \$4 billion—maybe \$5 billion. Well, that doesn't pay much out of the \$130 billion. Then the next year, when you no longer have the dividends, what are you going to sell next? That is not the way to run the province.

No businessman in his right mind would sell something that actually makes money. Why do you think the private sector wants Hydro One? Because it makes money. That's why the public should keep it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's a pleasure to join in this debate about a very interesting opposition day motion from the PC Party.

I'd like to start by using a phrase that the Leader of the Opposition used in his opening remarks. He used the phrase "bad energy policy." I thought it would be worthwhile to really talk about a bad energy policy that the province of Ontario has had in the past. That bad energy policy occurred on the watch of the government of Premiers Harris and Eves. Let's talk about the principles of a bad energy policy which was a Progressive Conservative energy policy. I'm just going to go through this motion and talk about this motion in the context of what the party continues to advocate, which is a bad energy policy.

There are four principles to PC energy policy. The first principle and the most important is to do nothing. PCs talk about, "Oh, well, we're going to prevent rates from going up." Their way of doing that is to simply do nothing. Take your transmission assets, take your generation assets and run them into the ground. Now, in the short term, that actually does keep your rates down. You could see what that policy does by looking at many of the utilities in the United States.

I'm reminded of a conference I was at last year, in 2014, in which I was talking with my counterparts in the northeastern states. What my counterparts, state senators and state legislators, said to me was, "You know, we envy you in Ontario. You guys had the backbone to take a lot of the tough decisions 10 years ago." Here's how they put it: "You bought yourself tomorrow's infrastructure and you paid for it with yesterday's dollars at near-zero interest rates." That, Speaker, is the flip side of doing nothing. You can do nothing and let your infrastructure, your generation, your transmission and your substations run right into the ground. Indeed, that has been PC Party energy policy, but it is not the policy of this province and this government.

We're looking forward to a day when our children and their children can live as we did as we grew up. We grew up in an era where industry was expanding, people were coming to this province. We had the generation assets we needed. We had the transmission assets we needed. We had the electricity system that we needed. We had it because governments of the day had the backbone to make the decisions to build Ontario's power dams and to build Ontario's transmission networks after the war. It was called "rural electrification" in all of the provinces in Canada. The idea after World War II—in the 1940s and the 1950s—in the lifetime of many of us who sit in this House, was that there were a lot of people outside the major cities who didn't have electric power. A lot of that infrastructure, which was built 40, 50 and 60 years ago, is still substantially in place today.

What difference has it made? You can see, in the States, where they have problems when their systems go down. We had that too back in 2003, and our government

said, “No more.” That means that Ontario has built some 5,000 kilometres of new or refurbished transmission lines. That’s all to ensure that Ontario doesn’t run into the same problem that it did 12 years ago.

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The second principle of PC energy policy is very simple: to burn coal. Nothing is quicker, nothing is cheaper and nothing is dirtier than burning coal. What did this same party do on its eight-year unfortunate watch between 1995 and 2003? They burned coal. They burned all the coal they could. What difference did it make? It meant that kids were going to school and having to have puffers, that smog days here in the greater Toronto area were most days during the week during the summer. How many smog days have we had in the last three years here? I believe you can count them on the fingers of one hand.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Almost none.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Exactly. We just don’t have smog days. These days, elementary school kids are not having to show up at school with puffers. More kids are enjoying the benefit of clean air because this government has had the backbone to violate the second principle of Progressive Conservative energy policy, which is to burn coal. We don’t burn coal in the province of Ontario anymore. Not a single lump.

In the vein of burning coal, let’s look at the third principle of PC Party energy policy, and that is to buy US electricity, most of it generated by burning coal, at spot market rates. Let me give you an example of just what kind of a disaster this is. Back at the turn of the century, when, by the way, it was a Progressive Conservative government that originally proposed the sale of Hydro One—and that truly was a fire sale, because they were going to sell off 100% of it. Under their watch, the province of Ontario and its taxpayers would own nothing, not a single bit of Hydro One. That’s not what is being proposed now. What is being proposed now is that the province of Ontario retains a controlling interest in Hydro One, and retains it forever.

When the PCs had their unfortunate eight years to experiment with their neo-con philosophy in electricity generation and transmission, what they were doing—do you remember the stranded debt, that debt that is now almost completely paid? That stranded debt began in the late 1990s, at the same time that the PC government of the day had frozen electricity rates at 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour. The power system in Ontario was so weak and so shaky that the PC government of the day had to contract to buy power on the spot market—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. The member from Mississauga will sit down. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I bring to your attention standing orders 23(h) and (i): making false allegations against members, such as the members of this caucus, and also imputing false or unavowed motives to other members. He is speaking about policies that he has no knowledge

of whatsoever, inventing this, and then ascribing them to another party in this Legislature. That is clearly against the standing orders and he should be forced to withdraw it. In fact, using the term “neo-con” is not acceptable in this chamber when talking about other members of this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Your point of order has been duly noted, but I do believe some of the substance was correct, what he was saying. Some of the substance may require further research, but the bottom line is I don’t think that he’s out of order.

Continue.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you very much, Speaker.

That third principle of buying US coal-fired electricity on the spot market and paying upwards of a dollar per kilowatt hour and reselling it at 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour—in fact, contributed to nearly a billion dollars on Ontario’s stranded debt—a billion dollars. So that amount meant that—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, let’s hope it’s legit. Go ahead.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, I believe it is. Speaker, today’s opposition day motion reads as follows: “That the government provide the House, and therefore the public, with all reports and financial analysis used by them to justify the sale of Hydro One no later than October 8, 2015.” It would be helpful to this House if the member would actually spend five seconds of his dissertation speaking to the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Since you’ve been up twice, I’m going to take a five-minute break. I’m going to discuss it with the Clerks’ table and I’ll come back with an answer.

The House recessed from 1615 to 1621.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member might want to get back in his seat. Go ahead.

I have come to a decision on this matter. The whole process of a point of order is to go directly to the point where it’s felt the violation has taken place. It doesn’t include a long speech about what the person said or what they didn’t say. It’s my decision to cut it off when I cut it off.

It’s probably not good to make comments from the Chair on certain points of order, too; that is true. But when it becomes a game to just disrupt the other person—and that does happen in here, both ways; it happens all the time where people are doing it deliberately to shut down debate—I will not put up with that. If it isn’t to the exact point of order, you’ll be shut down quickly.

I ask that you please don’t do it just to disrupt the other person—and that applies to everyone—because I think it does a disservice to this whole Legislature. Please try to co-operate in that manner. Thank you.

Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you for clarifying that, Speaker. I do have to say, however, that my friend the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is an honourable man and a good member, and I am proud to say that I can call him a friend.

Speaker, I was in the middle of explaining the four principles of the PC energy policy, because they are very important to understanding the motive and the response to the motion that has been made here. Let's just summarize those four pillars quickly.

- (1) Do nothing at all. Run your assets into the ground.
- (2) Burn coal. It's quick, cheap and dirty.
- (3) Buy US coal-fired power on the spot market.
- (4) When all of that doesn't work, blame the Liberals.

Now, let's get on to the subject of this particular motion, which asks that all reports and financial analysis used by the Ministry of Energy and the government to justify the sale of Hydro One be provided to the House. Speaker, in fact, it has been, and it's called the Hydro One preliminary prospectus. It's a very substantial booklet, running to nearly 300 pages.

I do want to discuss some parts of it. For example, Speaker, where the Leader of the Opposition has asked for "all reports and financial analysis," I would point out to him that if he's looking, for example, for the largest distributors of power in Ontario, he could find that on page 7. Presuming that he would like to see Hydro One's capital expenditures, he could find that on page 11. Should he, for example, be wishing to read the Hydro One return on equity for both transmission and distribution, he could find that on page 13. If he is looking for operations data—very critical in determining the viability of Hydro One, especially by prospective investors—he could find that on pages 17 to 19.

One of the things that is well worth reading the prospectus for would be the overview of the electricity industry. It is simply one of the best overviews I've ever read anywhere, and he could find that between pages 20 and 28. I'm sure the Leader of the Opposition, in asking for reports and financial analyses, would be very interested in how Hydro One would become a rate-regulated utility. He could find that on pages 29 to 33. I'm sure the other thing that he would be keen on finding out is what are Hydro One's capital expenses by category, and he could find that on page 35.

If I were the Leader of the Opposition, and considering the request that he's made to the government, he might be looking for distribution rate applications, because this is something that they keep going on about. Now, he could find that on page 45. Not only does he not have to wait until October 8 or any other date that he'd wish to name, it's already there. He could have had it a week ago.

Now, Speaker, perhaps he is looking for the consolidated financial information. That is on page 51. Indeed, he could be seeking out the changes in credit ratings. He could find that on page 55. The Leader of the Opposition, in asking for some of the material that the government used in making this decision, might be interested in purchased power costs, for example. That's published on page 60 of the preliminary prospectus.

Among the other things he could find are the contractual obligations and commercial commitments. That would be page 72. Or the customer satisfaction measure-

ments employed by Hydro One. That would be on page 74. The leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition might be interested in how Hydro One and the province view relationships with the Independent Electricity System Operator, Ontario Power Generation, the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp. and the Ontario Energy Board. There is a discussion that begins on page 90 about that.

One of the things that they talk about as a contributor to rates would be the pension plan contributions. Of course, that's on page 94. You could, in fact, find the entire proposed corporate structure on page 101. Among the other key things that I'm sure the Leader of the Opposition is looking for would be the governance measures, which are described in great detail beginning on page 108. I'm sure he would be interested in reading up on the directors and some of the details about them in their biographies. That's covered in a lot of detail beginning on page 121. Indeed, the entire board mandate is covered on page 130.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, I'd like to draw your attention on a point of order to section 23(d) of the standing orders, where it says that if, in the opinion of the Speaker, the person "refers at length to debates of the current session, or reads unnecessarily from verbatim reports of the legislative debates or any other document," it would be ruled out of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I believe that the member was relating his points of information to the motion at this point. If I feel that he's straying from that too far, I'll certainly clamp down.

Continue.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you very much, Speaker. Indeed, what I'm reading from is in my own handwriting. The actual document is sitting here on my desk.

The point that I'm trying to make is that the very information requested in this opposition day motion is information that not only doesn't have to be tabled by October 8, it was already published a week ago Friday.

Among the other things that I think are germane to this discussion is that they keep saying elsewhere where such a measure has been done, the electricity bills are higher. Where is this "elsewhere"? I've been listening very carefully in this debate throughout and no one has actually quoted this to me. Now, they've often referred to Ontario's proposed means of financing the infrastructure needs that Ontarians very, very much need in this province at this time as a "fire sale." That term may apply accurately to the proposed disposal of Hydro One some 15 years ago by a Progressive Conservative government but not by this government.

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As my colleague from Durham has pointed out, if you really want to see an example of a fire sale on the watch of a PC government, all one has to do is look at the disposal of Highway 407. The Spanish consortium that

bought Highway 407 has been pulling profits out of this province—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I think we're drifting a little bit. Member from Mississauga, please get back to the motion. The 407 is the distant past. Thank you.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you, Speaker. There's plenty in the motion to continue to talk about. In fact, it was the party opposite that had used the predecessor of Hydro One, that being Ontario Hydro, and its generation spinoff, Ontario Power Generation, as sinecures for many of their loyalists during the waning years of their government, something which again—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: "Sinecures" is a good word.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Yes. The government in fact did learn from what the Leader of the Opposition called "bad energy policy," but it was bad Progressive Conservative energy policy. That's why, Speaker, this job is being done in this way.

As this measure is done to finance the building of infrastructure, I have to ask the party opposite, you either believe that we need better infrastructure or you don't. Their default position has been to do nothing. Very likely, they don't believe that our infrastructure, our roads, all of our regional infrastructure needs are in fact necessary at all. If you believe that our roads, our transit, our bridges need to be improved, then you're either willing to do something about it or you're not. So far, what we've found out is that the Progressive Conservative Party either doesn't believe that our infrastructure needs to be improved, or they're not willing to do anything about it.

If you're willing to do something about it, then you're willing to make the choices to get the job done or you aren't. And if you're willing to make the choices to get the job done, let's look at the options in front of you.

The first option, the PC default option, of course, is to do nothing. This government doesn't feel that doing nothing is an option for Ontarians in the future.

So what are our options in order to get the work done that this province very much needs? Should we raise corporate taxes? Should we borrow it all? Should we raise income taxes? Should we raise sales taxes? Should we toll public roads that we've already bought and paid for? Should we take apart what works well, such as health care and education?

I think if we show Ontarians that this is the range of choices we actually face if we're going to pay bills of this magnitude, and then say that in addition to these choices—borrowing it all, raising corporate taxes, raising income taxes, raising sales taxes, tolling our roads, taking apart our health care, our education, our justice system, all of those things that serve us well—what we could do is acquire more public assets, as a province, by extracting some value from some of our existing public assets and, in essence, broaden our asset portfolio—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, I do have to object. The motion before us is about the production of documents about the sale of Hydro One. The member has not drifted; he's way off on infrastructure, toll roads, and a host of other government initiatives and policies that have nothing to do with the production of documents regarding the sale of Hydro One.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): From what I can observe, he's trying to relate why they're selling Hydro One to do those particular things. It does relate indirectly to the Hydro One sale, because that's what the proceeds are going to be used for. So I would suggest that, no, he isn't out of order, but if he does, I assure the member, I'll let him know.

Continue.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you very much again, Speaker. I would in fact remind the member opposite that if what he wants to see is the production of documents, he can find 133 pages of financial statements, including the board mandate and the audit committee mandate, in the Hydro One preliminary prospectus. It is in fact very much a comprehensive document and represents the most complete disclosure of financial and other information on Hydro One that has ever been produced by the public.

So this opposition day motion really boils down to whether or not the party opposite believes that we actually need to renew our infrastructure. The government believes we do; they may not. It then says if you believe that we're willing to renew it, then you're willing to do something or you're not. We believe that we're willing to do something on this side; I doubt that they are. If you're willing to do something about it, then you're also willing to make the choices. I know that on this side, the people of Ontario and this government are willing to make that choice, and the opposition party is not. That, Speaker, is why this opposition day motion does not deserve the support of this House and that's why I urge that it be defeated today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Prince Edward-Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'm pleased, as the Hydro One critic for the Progressive Conservative Party, that I get the opportunity to support the opposition day motion put forward by our leader, Patrick Brown.

Before I get into some of my remarks, I would just like to say that it doesn't sound like the Liberal government is going to turn over any documents to justify their sale of Hydro One. From what I just heard from the member for Mississauga-Streetsville, it doesn't sound like they're willing to turn over documents. But given that the last time that they were forced to turn over documents at the estimates committee it didn't work out so well for the government of the day—I think not only did we see the Premier resign and prorogue; we also saw the energy minister resign and maybe even a couple of other members of the Liberal cabinet decided that they might want to depart early. So you can understand why they might be a little bit sensitive about releasing any documents.

However, we have a new Premier over there who said she was going to be open and transparent and that she was going to do things differently than the previous administration did here at Queen's Park. Clearly that's not the case, because it doesn't sound like, anyway, they're willing to support the motion that was brought forward today by our leader, Mr. Brown.

I would just like to touch on a couple of other items. That has to do with allegations from the member that the PC Party hasn't done anything. It was PC governments of the past that built our nuclear power plants. It was PC governments of the past that built our hydroelectric facilities in the province of Ontario. I'm talking about more than 80% of our base load power in nuclear and hydroelectric. All this government has done is create chaos in our electricity sector by adding unwanted, unreliable, expensive, unaffordable green energy projects that aren't providing the electricity that we need in Ontario.

Yesterday the Minister of Energy asserted in his remarks to the estimates committee that the government had a mandate to sell Hydro One. What a joke. What a joke that is. However, the sale of Hydro One seems to have occurred in the dark, behind closed doors, with edicts having been delivered from on high, with stationery not marked with the Premier's stationery or by the Minister of Energy. It says, "From the desk of Ed Clark" on it. He's not an elected official.

The reason for that is that there are basic methods of accountability that are built into our system that the process for selling Hydro One seems to have avoided completely in this case. The most basic of these is the airing of issues in an election. However, the Liberal platform from the 2014 election is completely silent on the issue of selling Hydro One. The closest it comes to mentioning anything even remotely resembling what would become the Hydro One sale are two passages where it states, and I quote from the Liberal election platform, "We will explore opportunities to sell properties such as the LCBO and Ontario Power Generation headquarters and the Seaton lands in Durham region, providing a return to the province."

Another passage reads, "We will reduce the number of agencies by 30% in 2015 compared to the number in 2011, and make them more accountable for the taxpayer dollars they spend. We will undertake compulsory reviews of agency mandates that will seek to determine whether or not particular agencies should be downsized, declassified, consolidated or divested." No specific mention of Hydro One was ever made in the Liberal election document.

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Given that there was no mention in the Liberal platform of the sale or divestiture of Hydro One and no mention of the Premier's famous "broadening of ownership" is ever used, the government simply can't make the claim that it has a mandate from the electorate in Ontario. And there's a reason for that: The best public opinion polling data that we have says that 83% of the Ontario public

opposes selling Hydro One—83% oppose selling Hydro One. A recent poll conducted on behalf of the Ontario Energy Association—get this—found that 55.5% of Ontario Liberal supporters oppose the fire sale of Hydro One.

Now even Liberal candidates in the upcoming federal election are coming out in opposition as well. While Justin Trudeau and the Premier are joined hip to hip, side by side, throughout this election campaign, I can't help but wonder if the Premier knows what Mr. Trudeau's candidates are saying as they go door to door and at local debates in all-candidates meetings across the province.

Mary Jean McFall, the Liberal candidate in the new riding of Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes—a beautiful place, Mr. Speaker—said at an all-candidates meeting on September 22, 2015, just over a week ago, "This is not the time to sell Hydro One." She continued, "I don't think we know enough about what the consequences of that sale would be. I also think we would like to know from the government, the Liberal government of Ontario, whether that means rates are going to go up...."

The next built-in method for accountability that we have to ensure that government action takes place in the daylight is at the legislative committees and hearings. The Hydro One sale was, however, included in an omnibus budget bill with dozens of other schedules. Traditionally, in the past, when crown corporations were being privatized, they were debated separately from the budget, and hearings for that bill were dedicated solely to that subject matter, the sale of the crown asset. This sale, by contrast, was included in the budget with dozens of other matters and was expected to share the five days of committee hearings—all of which took place here in Toronto—that were dedicated to the entire budget and not specifically about the sale of Hydro One. Even if someone wanted to conclude that that in some way constituted consultation, it's certainly insufficient to the gravity of selling a crown corporation with a 100-year history.

So we have a policy that was never proposed or debated in the election. When it was brought before the Legislature, it was included in a bill that included a number of other issues and precluded it from the kind of treatment at committee that would have compelled the disclosure of documents, as this motion put forward by Mr. Brown envisions. The government knew this, which is why the government likely rammed it through with the rest of the budget bill.

Presently, Hydro One is still entirely in public hands, but the schedules of the budget remove it from all oversight, as we know. So it's not just that the opposition has no access to information and documents pertaining to the sale; the officers of the Legislature have no ability to oversee the details of the sale either.

The Hydro One preliminary prospectus additionally removes much of the Auditor General's ability to receive necessary information about revenue and expenditure for the public portion of Hydro One. It also removes all

ability to gain information through freedom-of-information requests.

There is clearly, Mr. Speaker, something about the sale of Hydro One that the government doesn't want people to know, because it's removing literally any way of them learning it.

Still, yesterday, the minister appeared before the estimates committee and stated that he believed the government had a mandate to sell Hydro One. His reason for claiming this mandate: Prior to the election, the government had already tasked Ed Clark with the responsibility of maximizing the value of government assets. The only problem is, Ed Clark's name wasn't on the ballot anywhere. There was no way for the public to pass judgment on his performance or demand further information about his process, because if there had been, we'd have known in advance, as we do now from industry sources, that one of the original proposals was to split the Hydro One distribution assets from the transmission assets. In the words of one industry executive, the original recommendation was to "sell the highways but not the gas stations." That was subsequently rejected because of pressure in the Premier's office.

The public would have no knowledge of this, because the process by which it was determined which assets would be sold, and how, was conducted entirely behind closed doors. But I suppose the members of the government aren't going to take my word for it. We've already heard the leader of our party recite some of the words of the mayor of Sarnia from his press conference here earlier this week. He came to Queen's Park and stated that the government did more consultation with municipalities on regulations for pit bulls and clotheslines than it did pertaining to the sale of Hydro One.

To date, 170 municipalities have passed resolutions opposing this sale. That's a third of the province's municipalities who oppose losing an invaluable public asset. Four of those municipalities are in my riding. All of them are on Hydro One, and all of them will be deemed low-density areas in terms of distribution—they're pretty spread apart customers. They have no access to documentation; they had no consultation. They, like members of this Legislature, like the workers who will be affected by the offshoring agreement I brought up this morning in question period, like ratepayers in low-density areas who will see their bills go up, are forced to learn things through the media.

Never once has this government sought a mandate for this change. It has never once given the public a chance to pass judgment on whether it wants the sale. In lieu of that, it owes the public access to all possible documentation that it can provide. In a sale that the people of Ontario oppose, that 170 municipalities oppose as of today, that 55.5% of Ontario Liberal supporters oppose, this government has denied them access to information about it. More than that, it has denied access to information to the watchdogs.

However, members of this government continually get to their feet and respond to statements they previously

made opposing any sale of Hydro One by saying that what they really opposed wasn't selling Hydro One, it was just the government that was selling Hydro One that they opposed, which is a bit like saying that you don't oppose smoking, you just oppose Joe Camel or the Marlboro Man.

We don't have independent evidence to suggest that rates won't go up; we only have the minister's word that the OEB will try to keep rates down. We don't have independent evidence that the government will actually get the revenue it expects from Hydro One. The Premier is actually just expecting us to take Ed Clark's word for that.

The amazing part? Our Auditor General has a history with Manitoba Hydro. She has experience in the electricity sector. This is an individual who is not only qualified to tell us whether the Ontario public will be well served by this sale; she has the unique experience in the electricity sector to tell us whether the government is trying to sell us a bill of goods on ever-increasing electricity rates.

When you question the government, what do they respond with? They start telling you how terrible the government was that was in power when the Spice Girls were in the Top 40. That's what they do.

Mr. Grant Crack: "Stop right now, thank you very much."

Mr. Todd Smith: The fact that the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell can sing Spice Girls songs is quite remarkable and, I think, says a lot about that member as well.

You know what? It's incredible. It's as if the last 12 years never happened to the government. It's like the last 12 years never existed. They've had 12 years to get things right in the province of Ontario. They have made things a hundred times worse in our electricity sector. Then these members will go on and tell you that the sale of Hydro One is necessary as part of a \$130-billion infrastructure plan, to which it will contribute about 3% of the money. That's what this sale will do. If everything goes according to plan, it will raise about 3% of the money for their infrastructure plan.

The amazing part is that if the province simply kept Hydro One, the asset generates between \$700 million and \$800 million a year in revenue. So in about five and a half years, we'd have all the revenue that we're going to generate from selling this asset. And when you project out from those five and a half years, we retain a revenue stream that can be used to fund even more infrastructure for generations to come. The preliminary problem with selling assets and treating the sale as income is that you can only sell an asset once, and then it's gone. Bye-bye, no more revenue stream.

Of course, if the Financial Accountability Officer was able to look into this and report it to the Legislature, we might hear much the same thing. But that would require an open process, and clearly that isn't the case here. And that is one thing that we most certainly do not have here: is an open process. Given this government's track record

when it comes to releasing documents for the committees, for members of the opposition, for the general public and for the media, it hasn't worked out very well for this government the last 12 years in the past.

1650

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to be able to stand and speak to this motion and again have the opportunity to speak against the sell-off of Hydro One. This government's stubborn refusal to consider options or to consider stopping the sell-off of Hydro One has been a terrible thing to watch.

We know this government doesn't like to listen—I take that back. They like to listen to those who praise them and who perhaps are paid handsomely to advise them, but they sure aren't listening to Ontarians. The priority of this government actually is to “beer” Ontario and not to hear Ontario. I'm here today and hopefully they will listen to the voices I'm bringing with me from my riding and hopefully they will hear them.

First, I'd like to share the voice of a group called Keep Hydro Public. Members from this group organized themselves in my riding because this issue is so important. It's a group that came together to bring awareness to their community about the short-sighted sell-off of Hydro One. They said:

“Keep Hydro Public is a group of concerned Oshawa citizens. We are not opposed to transit and infrastructure, and realize that every budget has plums and barbs, but the sell-off of Hydro One is a barb, will raise hydro rates and have a direct impact on manufacturing jobs all across Ontario and we believe it will be difficult to retain the jobs we presently have. Wasteful spending scandals on eHealth, Ornge, gas plants, software glitches etc. could have paid for transit and infrastructure without selling Hydro One.” I thank them for their voice, and hopefully the government heard that.

Now I'd like us to hear from our city council. On June 8, 2015, Oshawa city council passed this resolution. I know that the government already has a copy of it, but I would like to read part of that here today:

“Be it resolved that the city of Oshawa call on the provincial government to:

—“Halt the sale of any part of Hydro One, and maintain Hydro One as a public asset for the benefit of all Ontarians;

—“Strengthen Hydro One by investing in the next generation of workers and upgrading our electricity transmission infrastructure;

—“Respect the autonomy and local decision-making powers of local distribution companies by not forcing these companies into mergers or sales....” It continues, but of course they have a copy.

I would now like to bring the voice of business into this Legislature. This was published in the September newsletter from the Greater Oshawa Chamber of Commerce. The title of the article is “Chamber Calls for Transparency on Sale of Hydro One.”

“Rising electricity prices is a collective concern and have put Ontario businesses at a competitive disadvantage,” said Bob Malcolmson, CEO and general manager of the Greater Oshawa chamber....

“The Ontario chamber network is concerned that the sale of Hydro One could adversely affect the cost of doing business in the province by adding to the rising price of electricity,” said Malcolmson. “As such, we are seeking detailed clarification from the government on how the sale will impact electricity prices.”

So far, I have shared the voices of the community, municipal government and businesses in Oshawa, but there are more voices: charities in our community providing necessary and basic services to those in need—incidentally, there's more and more need in our communities. But pressures on charities are also increasing.

One example that was shared with me is from the YWCA Durham, which is a not-for-profit registered charity serving Durham region's most vulnerable for the past 70 years. They offer a variety of programs focusing on women, families and youth, with a particular focus on women and children who are victims of violence. Over the past three years, all three utilities combined increased by almost \$55,000, and for them, that equates to a 40% increase, which clearly impacts on their ability to deliver service. Breaking it down further, though, hydro rates alone over a three-year period increased by 41%. As you can imagine, that is having a direct impact on their ability to provide the services that we so desperately need in our communities.

While I'm glad to bring the voices and concerns of groups and organizations, it's always my privilege to speak on behalf of individuals who seldom have a chance to be heard and whose voices are sometimes lost in the conversation.

This is from an email that I received from Eric Neshevich, a concerned individual. He says, “I am writing to express my opposition to the Ontario government's proposed privatization of Hydro One and local, publicly operated electricity utilities.

“I have seen no evidence that there will be benefits for Ontario residents. Private, for-profit ownership of hydro will mean higher rates, lower dependability, and an end to public control over this vital service.

“In addition, Hydro One currently provides around \$800 million for the province every single year, revenues that help fund our hospitals, schools, and other public services. The plan to privatize 60% or more of Hydro One will result in most of that revenue disappearing, forever. That's hundreds of millions of dollars going every year into the pockets of private owners, instead of toward the public services that Ontarians need.

“I urge you to take my concerns to the Premier and the Minister of Finance. No one-time sell-off is worth the lasting damage that the privatization of public utilities will cause my community and our province.”

I thank Mr. Neshevich for his email.

Finally, my friend and constituent Susie Boyle shared her concerns with me, her concerns for people struggling

in our community to get by. She said, “One of our older ladies at our church was crying one day because she couldn’t pay her hydro bill. She’s living in the house that she and her husband lived in for 50 years, and she can’t pay the bills. Her hydro is too expensive. Fortunately, our church could help her. But I mean, that’s just one lady. How many more seniors are in that same position? [Do] they have to give up their family home or do they give up paying for their prescription to pay their hydro bills, meaning that their health will suffer? Or do they give up buying food?”

I appreciate her question, and I’m sure that members of this Legislature have been hearing those questions and concerns on a regular basis in their offices.

These voices are from individuals, charities, businesses and municipal leaders. These concerns are echoed across my community and across every community in this province. These concerns are not partisan, but they are professional, they are personal and they are sincere. I think that they’re worth listening to, in fairness, and I don’t know that they should be disregarded, as we’re seeing here again.

Government, I hope you’ve heard these voices today. Please hear them. Listen to people in organizations across the province and turn this ship around. Change course and keep hydro public.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): The Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I’m very happy to have the chance to have the opportunity to stand in my place this afternoon and speak strongly in opposition to what I can only term a very bizarre opposition day motion from the relatively newly minted leader of Her Majesty’s opposition, Mr. Brown, of course, the member from Simcoe North.

We’ve heard a lot of discussion this afternoon from the member from Mississauga in our caucus, who spoke very eloquently not that long ago in the chamber and went into great detail about all of the information, whether he was talking about the prospectus or other sources of information, all of the very detailed information that has been put into the public domain that would effectively render this motion redundant.

So when you take a step back and think about perhaps what the motivation is of the Leader of the Opposition with respect to this motion, or what the guiding principle is at the heart, at the very foundation, of what the Leader of the Opposition is putting forward—and listening of course to the questions, day after day, that he poses of the Premier and others in this chamber—one can only presume that there’s a certain degree of, I guess, politics involved, which is not surprising. Of course, we are all politicians in this chamber. As members on all sides of the House will know, I enjoy the cut and thrust of debate here in the Legislature as much as—if not, perhaps, even more than—the next member.

But it’s unfortunate to me that with such an important topic, as has been talked about on all sides of this House, the idea that we need to move the province forward in

terms of building up our crucial infrastructure—we put, as has been mentioned, before the people of Ontario, through the delivery of a budget last year, a second budget, the same budget, after the election campaign itself. We had an election platform that explicitly talked about opportunities to optimize or recycle assets and specifically mentioned some of the assets in the electricity sector.

1700

We passed that budget here in this Legislature, with the strong mandate that we received from the people of Ontario last June, a strong mandate that I think was driven not exclusively but in large part because there is a thirst across Ontario—whether you live in the north or you live in rural Ontario or you live in urban or suburban Ontario—for modern infrastructure. It can be roads; it can be bridges; it can be broadband; it can be natural gas extensions; it can be public transit. But people understand that, unfortunately, notwithstanding the billions that our government has invested since 2003 in all forms of infrastructure, we live in an era of what I like to call “catch up and keep up.” “Catch up” is the fact that for generations, at all levels and of all partisan stripes, governments have underinvested chronically in crucial infrastructure, and “keep up,” because whether you’re in the north or the south, rural or urban, people know that there continues to be growth and there continues to be an economic and quality-of-life need to make sure that we continue to invest in infrastructure.

Of course, we went forward to the people with a clear plan that was explicit with respect to which assets we were going to look at. That same explicit notion or sentiment was included in the budget that passed in this Legislature, that was opposed by both opposition parties.

Months after the fact, when I think of my own portfolio and my own responsibility, as we have rolled out tons of new programs, tons of new projects, specifically, I think of members in both opposition caucuses who, I will say, do their job when they talk to me, either in questions in this chamber or offline in conversations in the corridors. They talk to me about the importance of making sure that we continue to invest in their communities.

I understand that the member from Perth–Wellington, I believe it is, in fact has a private member’s bill or motion coming up—I think it’s up for debate next week; I saw a press release on this today—that specifically calls on the government to make more investments in infrastructure. He should say that. His community has needs. All 107 electoral districts represented in this chamber have significant infrastructure needs. It’s why we have made the difficult decisions. It’s why Premier Wynne and the rest of our team have made the tough decision to make sure that we have the resources available and ready to invest in crucial infrastructure.

Whether we’re talking about the re-establishment or the reinstatement of a stand-alone Connecting Links fund that will benefit more than 70 communities across the province of Ontario, which was a much-celebrated

announcement by all of our municipal partners when the Premier and others in our government talked about it at the recent AMO conference; whether we're talking about transit investments that are being made right across the province of Ontario, from Ottawa to Waterloo to the greater Toronto and Hamilton area; whether we're talking about—and I certainly hear about this from colleagues on this side of the House—the importance of making sure that we have funds in place, and that we have the desire and the will to go forward with four-laning crucial highways or portions of crucial highways in northern Ontario—this is all part of that same ambitious plan. We call it the Moving Ontario Forward plan. But at the very heart of it, it goes to that notion that we have to continue to invest, that we have to continue to play that “catch up and keep up.”

I would think that a member, and in this case, I'm referring to the Leader of the Opposition, bringing forward this thinly veiled, politically opportunistic motion here this afternoon—I would think that that member, representing for a decade a community in the federal House of Commons that is a fast-growing community—I'm talking about Barrie, of course. I know he represents a community that abuts Barrie now, here in this Legislature. To think about Barrie, just to the north of my community, so much in need for crucial infrastructure, and to know that for a decade—that particular member wants us to forget today that for a decade, he was not at the table in Ottawa. He was not telling the Prime Minister—he was not telling his cabinet colleagues, his caucus colleagues—that it was important to stand up for the province of Ontario, that it was important to stand up for Barrie. In fact, he was doing the opposite. He was absent, as my friends in the military would say, absent without leave when it comes—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The minister knows we don't talk about absenteeism. I think he's stretching the personal attack a little bit. So could we get back to the motion, please?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I will. Thank you very much, Speaker.

I'm going to wrap up just by saying I think that all those who have any experience or have witnessed the Leader of the Opposition's political career will notice, whether we're talking about the motion here this afternoon or we're talking about the questions that he asks in this House, he is in fact—and I've said this in the back and forth here in this chamber, Speaker—starting to resemble somewhat of a pretzel as he twists himself into these bizarre positions around what he believes. Now that it's opportunistic and important for him, suddenly he has woken up to the idea that we have to make these crucial investments.

It's a shame, Speaker, because on this side of the House, whether we're talking about two-way all-day GO service to Barrie, whether we're talking about rehabilitating, extending, expanding and building new highways across the GTHA and beyond, the Connecting Links plan, the four-laning, supporting rapid transit in London,

supporting communities, Ottawa, Kitchener, Waterloo and beyond—that's why we are making these tough decisions. It's what the people of Ontario gave us the mandate to do, and we're going to keep working hard to make sure that we build up the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, Speaker, it's interesting listening to the Minister of Transportation talking about pretzels, because my goodness gracious, they've got a whole roster of them over there. In fact, this morning I was worried that the Minister of Energy might throw out his back with the flip-flop he seems to have had to make when it comes to the sale of Hydro One, based on his absolute position on it when he was the mayor of Ottawa, saying that this cannot be done. I mean, you want to talk about the masters of duplicity? They're sitting on the other side of the House.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Oh, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I can do it without your assistance, if I feel it's out of line. Thank you.

We'll remove that one word that starts with a D. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw, Speaker.

It shocked the heck out of me that the member from Etobicoke was actually awake. Usually when he's in here, he's snoozing. But anyway, let's get back to the motion today.

So here we are talking about taking two sides on an issue. My God, I was in here speaking last week, and I was in here speaking a few months ago before the House rose, on two different opposition day motions by the third party. I listed quote after quote after quote from Liberals, current and past, about their positions on selling not just Hydro One but public assets. They were absolutely opposed to it. Now, all of a sudden, the Minister of Transportation—he's the guy who builds roads.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: No quotes from me, though.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You weren't here long enough, and nothing that you said was quotable, apparently. But here's the guy who's in charge of infrastructure.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm a work in progress, John.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Gentlemen, we do know the new rules. We talk through me—to me, not to each other. Okay? Otherwise the guillotine will be coming down. Okay?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, the minister is the guy who looks after the infrastructure, and here he now subscribes to this belief, in his own words, that this government can't build infrastructure in Ontario unless it sells off public assets. If you want to talk about an admission of failure on the part of this minister and this government, every other Premier before Premier Wynne has been able to fund infrastructure in this province based on managing the financial affairs of the province and investing in infrastructure. All of a sudden now, here they say they can't do it without selling Hydro One. Do you know what they're going to realize out of that, Speaker?

They're going to realize \$4 billion—\$4 billion. They keep going on about a \$130-billion plan. You do the math. When that \$4 billion is gone, what do they attack next? What public assets get sold next?

That's why our leader, Patrick Brown, has put forth this motion, and I will read the motion for the people over there who didn't understand: "That the government provide the House, and therefore the public, with all reports and financial analysis used by them to justify the sale of Hydro One no later than October 8, 2015."

We got the parliamentary assistant from Mississauga over there giving his jaw a workout. He must have had something to eat down at the reception. So here we are. He's going through the prospectus. He's going through the prospectus and—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: It's all the info you're asking for.

1710

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's none of the—a prospectus is what you put out—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sit down. The Minister of Transportation is pushing the buttons. The member from the opposition is taking the buttons and throwing out barbs the other way, instead of talking to me. I know it's hard for you. Talk to me. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, that prospectus is like any other. When you're out to try to get an initial public offering, you're out to promote the sale of a particular asset. You're going out there and saying, "This is what we're offering." That, in no way, shape or form, in spite of what the member from Mississauga—Streetsville or the Minister of Transportation say, satisfies the request for a financial analysis used by them to justify the sale of Hydro One—in no way, shape or form. They are going out to the hopeful shareholders of the new corporation and saying, "This is what we've got to offer. This is what we want you to buy." It does not say anything about justifying the decision to sell.

The average person in the province of Ontario is not going to be buying shares of Hydro One. But you know what? They all pay a hydro bill. They're not going to buy shares in Hydro One. They either can't afford it or they're not interested. But they all pay a hydro bill, and they want to know what discussions took place, what analysis took place, what financial data was considered when those people over there, Speaker, made the decision to sell Hydro One. They're not looking for a fancy sales pitch, because that's what a prospectus is. It's just a very fancy sales pitch. Of course, they just spent a lot of money developing that. Because you know what they do over there very well? They spend a lot of money for little results.

So here we are. We're asking for all of the reports, just like all of the independent legislative officers—signed, sealed, delivered to the government: "Don't sell Hydro One." They will lose the oversight, and the people in the province of Ontario will lose the access to accountability.

That's what they're concerned about. That's why our leader, Patrick Brown, stood in this House today and said, "I want"—to paraphrase—"you to tell me what your business case was for selling Hydro One," not some fancy prospectus full of gobbledygook and fancy numbers. That's not what we're talking about here. Where was the financial analysis that said you had the right to sell that asset? That's what we want to know, and that's what the people of Ontario want to know.

The member from Mississauga likes to go on and on. He loves numbers. Oh, he just loves to quote numbers. Somehow he feels it makes people out there think, "Oh, he must know what he's talking about because look at all the numbers he's blabbing about." But they want to know why, and on what basis, you arrived at the conclusion that Hydro One should be sold, and not on the basis that we all know.

You know, some numbers are simple: the deficit in Ontario, the debt of Ontario. People understand those numbers, and they understand that you people are the ones who got us—those people over there, Speaker, are the ones who got us there. Those people over there, they're the ones who got us there. They're the ones who got us there, and they don't trust them. They don't trust them to sell Hydro One. They wouldn't trust them to run a lemonade stand, and here they are, going to sell off a \$16-billion corporation. This is their hope: They haven't sold the shares yet, but they say that they're going to get \$9 billion for the sale; \$5 billion dollars is going to go to pay off the debt. Well, whoop-de-do. We're chasing \$300 billion in debt in this province because of their mismanagement, and they're going to pay off \$5 billion of it. They're going to put \$4 billion to infrastructure in this province when they keep talking about needing \$130 billion.

We in the opposition, led by Patrick Brown, want to know, where's the business case? You haven't made it. You refuse to make it. Whenever you're asked for a business case, you come up with some other stuff. They try to cloud the issue. It doesn't matter whether it's the business case for Hydro One or trying to cloud the issue surrounding the Sudbury by-election scandal, the bribery scandal. When the Premier's asked a direct question, "Yes or no, did you direct Pat Sorbara or Gerry Loughhead Jr. to offer Andrew Olivier a bribe so that he wouldn't run?"—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, the member from Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm sure the Speaker knows why I have called that point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from the opposition will not talk about that particular incident, as it doesn't apply to the motion. You know, about the Sudbury deal. Okay? We'll stay away from that. You're drifting—

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's the Sudbury scandal that you're talking about?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thanks for repeating it. That's the one.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I will not refer to Sudbury or scandals or bribery or anything. I will refer to the motion—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The games are over. Okay? Warned.

Mr. John Yakabuski: On that note, Mr. Speaker, I believe I've made my point. I will cede the rest of my time here to another member of my caucus who is also eager to talk about the mess that those people over there have created.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm happy to stand here today and speak in support of this motion.

My riding of Niagara Falls is the birthplace of public hydro in this province. It's our falls that gave Sir Adam Beck the inspiration to build a public hydro system and it's those same falls that continue to provide clean energy for a large part of our province.

Now, my riding, the birthplace of public hydro in this province, is going to suffer because of this short-sighted and reckless sell-off of Hydro, this reckless sell-off that is opposed by more than 80%—I want the Liberals to hear this. I know they're not paying attention right now but maybe this will help you: eighty per cent of the residents of the province of Ontario are saying no to selling Hydro.

Just last week another voice in my riding was added to the large and growing number of voices that oppose the sale. On September 21, the council of the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake passed a resolution calling on the government of Ontario to stop the sale of Hydro. This wasn't the first community that did it. That makes 160 municipalities across the province who have stood up and told this government to stop the reckless privatization of Hydro One.

So 160 municipalities and more than 80% of the people of this province oppose this sale, but not our Premier and not this Liberal government. Instead they're moving full steam ahead as if they have blinders on. I'm not sure how else they can ignore the people and the municipalities of Ontario.

The first "whereas" clause in the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake's resolution says—and I would like the Liberals to listen—"Whereas the transmission and distribution of electricity is a natural monopoly and so needs to be both managed and regulated in a manner that serves the best interests of consumers." That could not be more accurate. It cannot be more obvious that this government seems to have forgotten about those last few words—that our hydro needs to serve the best interests of all consumers. Instead, the Liberal government is moving ahead with this reckless scheme that will serve the best interests of not one consumer.

Let me give you a few examples of consumers who aren't being served by this privatization scheme. There are a lot of seniors who live in all our communities, but who certainly make up my riding, because it's one of the

best places in Ontario to retire. I'm hearing from too many seniors that this sell-off is going to hurt them. The Premier knows full well that seniors in this province are already just getting by with their pensions.

Again, I'd like the Liberals to listen. You want to sell off Hydro One without any regard to the kind of impact it will have on seniors in the province of Ontario. I can tell you that they come into my office on a regular basis and they say to me, particularly the ones that I know really well, "Wayne, what are we going to do? Do we pay our hydro bill and warm our house or do we buy food? Do we pay our hydro bill and go light on my medicine?" So instead of taking two blood pressure pills a day, they may take one, or they may take one every three days. If you think that's not accurate, ask the seniors; they'll tell you.

1720

The seniors in my riding and all across this province need to know what's going to happen to the hydro rates. I say to my colleagues the Conservatives and the Liberals—we've asked this question over and over again—Guarantee us that the hydro rates won't go up, so I can tell the seniors that the rates aren't going to go up. You can't do that, and you know why: because you know as soon as they privatize it, it's going up. You know that.

This reckless sell-off is not just going to hurt seniors, Mr. Speaker; far from it—and I'm directing this through the Speaker. It's hurting young couples and their families as well. Young people can't buy their first home, can't move into a community, can't start a family, because they can't be sure what their hydro costs are going to be, because this process has zero transparency. When young couples can't come to our community, it hurts the entire community. We can't grow the economy; businesses don't have new customers; schools don't have new kids coming in. This hurts the entire province. Young couples and their families deserve to know what is going to happen if this government goes through with this reckless scheme.

I want to talk about my area, tourism and what's going to happen down there. Some people may know—some people may have come down to Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie—that this year we had 13 million visitors come to Niagara Falls. They came to the falls and into my riding for a number of reasons. It could have been for the falls. It could have been for the wineries—we have some beautiful wineries down in Niagara—the craft brewers, the Fort Erie Race Track. There are lots of things to do. All of them are being faced with higher hydro rates, which means less money to invest in their businesses and fewer jobs being created. We need a plan to create jobs from this Premier, not a plan that's going to drive people away.

Mr. Speaker, the tourist sector is calling me up—I know them quite well—and they say, "Gatesy, what are we supposed to do when hydro rates go up? Are we going to increase the costs of the rooms for the tourists? That's going to drive business away. Are we going to turn off the air conditioners in the rooms all summer? Or the water parks? What are we going to do? Turn off the

lights in the hallway? Stop using the elevators and make everybody climb the steps?" This is what's going on in the province of Ontario. It will mean fewer tourists are going to visit, and that's going to hurt other parts of the tourist industry even more. It's one big downward spiral for the tourist industry in my riding and across the province with this reckless plan to sell off Hydro One.

And yet, the Premier is so convinced the sell-off is going to benefit consumers. Well, Mr. Speaker, I say to the Liberal government, you prove it to us. Prove it to the tourist industry and the manufacturers. Prove it to the seniors and the young families.

Finally, we come to the biggest group that will be affected by this reckless scheme—

Interjections.

Mr. Wayne Gates: You want to hear what it is? I hear you heckling over there.

What are the manufacturers going to do when they leave this province because of hydro rates? That's what they're doing over and over again. In Niagara, we're selling hydro to the States, who are then subsidizing the manufacturers in the States. And guess what's happening, Mr. Speaker? Those jobs in Welland, those jobs in Hamilton are leaving our communities because of hydro rates.

So when you're telling us a plan—do you want to see those jobs go? Talk to the people at US Steel. Talk to the people at GM. Talk to the people at Ford and Chrysler. Talk to the small auto parts manufacturing. They're losing their jobs because of hydro rates, and when you privatize it, it's going to be worse. Make no mistake about it.

It's time this government allows the light to shine through. It's time this government pays attention to the seniors of this province and the young families looking to buy their first home. It's time for this government to give some answers to the tourist sector, who give so much to be proud of, and to the manufacturers who for so long made up the base of Ontario's economy.

It's time this government opened its eyes and ears. I'm going to say this again, because I know you're not all listening over there. It's time this government opened its eyes and ears and listened to nearly 160 municipalities who oppose the sale and more than 80% of Ontarians who stand with them. These people deserve answers from the Premier. She needs to come clean and put all the documents on the table.

I'm going to close by saying—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Hear, hear.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I didn't say that when you spoke, sir.

Here's the issue, and I want you to understand this very clearly: I had the privilege to run in two elections in four months in the province of Ontario. I ran in a by-election, and then I ran in a general election. I had the opportunity to run against two Liberals as well as Conservatives and the Green Party. I had the opportunity to do eight debates—count them, eight debates—against the Liberals. Do you know how many times the candidate

for the Liberals said they were going to sell Hydro, that they were going to put it in their platform? Do you want to hear how many? Somebody help me here. How many times do you think they raised that issue? How many? I want to hear it.

Interjections.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Zero, Mr. Speaker. Zero. Not once did they raise that they were going to sell off Hydro—not once in eight debates. Eight debates and they never once said it.

Guess what else they did? I went to the budget hearings in Fort Erie, because I figured, "Well, I'm going to hear something from the Liberals on anything." I went to the budget hearings. Do you know how many times—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Order, please.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Do you know how many times they raised it in the budget hearings? Not once.

I'm saying to you, do not stand across there and say you told the residents of Ontario that you were going to sell Hydro. You never told them once. You still haven't told them. And if you feel so confident that people would support selling Hydro, then have hearings right across the province and find out what the 80% of Ontarians want to see right here in the province of Ontario. I'll tell you that it's not to sell Hydro One.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Further debate?

Mr. Chris Ballard: I appreciate the opportunity to spend a few more minutes talking about the opposition motion, which I find really comes out of—I don't want to say "left field," but a rather bizarre place.

I just don't understand what information is possibly required. I, too, sit on estimates. We've been looking at energy, and I believe it is incumbent on members of the estimates committee to read up on the latest literature that the ministry has produced. I know that the prospectus that has been filed by the government explains and gives an awful lot of information that I think, if read by the Leader of the Opposition, might answer some of his questions.

I know some of the key questions; for example, transmission revenues. When you're looking at selling an asset, someone who wants to buy it will want to know about revenues. They'll want to know about the costs. They'll want to know about the market. They'll want to know about performance measures and targets. I can tell you that transmission revenues are dealt with in depth on page 57 of the prospectus; distribution revenues on page 57 of the prospectus. This should have been read before this bizarre motion was put in front of us.

You want a good market overview to give you a sense of what we're getting into—what potential buyers are getting into? Page 20 and on—it's there.

Performance measures and targets start on page 73. There's lots of really good information about Hydro One, probably the most amount of information you're ever going to find in one book. I would encourage members of

the opposition to pick it up and read it, because I think it would answer most of their questions.

Just to take it back to some of the fundamentals, as announced, our government—and I know this draws howls, but it is the truth—is broadening the ownership of Hydro One. We will retain, the people of Ontario will retain, a controlling interest of 40%. Our approach will generate billions to provide communities with the infrastructure they need.

1730

I can tell you that in my riding of Newmarket—Aurora, when I was knocking on doors in the past as a town councillor and most recently campaigning to be MPP for that fantastic riding, what did I hear at the doors? People asked me what I was going to do as a town councillor, what I was going to do as an MPP to make their lives better. The biggest single issue I heard time and again was about transportation—people having to spend three and four hours a day away from their families, stuck in gridlock, waiting for a GO train, waiting for traffic to clear. It destroys family life. One of the greatest things we can do as a government is to improve their ability to get to work and to get home in a timely manner. It not only improves their family time, it improves community time in all the communities where people commute to Toronto and back, because it gives them more time to spend volunteering in their community when they're not in transportation.

I heard the message loud and clear that we have to improve transportation, we have to improve our transit system. The question remains—and it's been reiterated over and over again—that those funds, those billions of dollars to improve GO train service, to improve transit and roads, have to come from somewhere. The sale, the broadening of ownership of Hydro One, in my belief and the belief of everyone on this side of the House, will provide some of those funds, the key portion of those funds.

A second key point, and it gets back to the request for documents because it's dealt with in the prospectus, is that this broadening of ownership will create an even stronger-performing Hydro One with a new board of directors and a new management team, one that has signalled its dedication to improved performance, improved customer service and improved system reliability. We've heard about problems with Hydro One in the past, and it's my belief that this broadening of ownership will go a long way to dealing with those issues.

I'll leave it there for now. I'll just say that this motion, in my mind, is without merit, and I cannot in good conscience support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Last May, I wrote to the Minister of Energy and asked that he transfer all of Hydro One's customers who reside in the city of Ottawa to Hydro Ottawa. This was one of the conditions of the amalgamation that created the new city of Ottawa in 2001. In the letter, I explained that it was an appropriate

time to fulfill his outstanding commitment, considering that the provincial government is planning on selling part of Hydro One to new owners and the details are murky at best. I further explained that the rural residents and businesses of the city of Ottawa who are served by Hydro One are in general paying significantly more than Hydro Ottawa customers. All Ottawa residents and businesses deserve to be treated equally, as was committed to during the provincially mandated amalgamation that was implemented in 2001.

The Minister of Energy was the mayor of Ottawa at the time, so of course he would be aware of his obligation, which he did not fulfill. The mess that is Hydro One, as documented both by the Auditor General and the Ombudsman, should not be foisted on Ottawa residents any longer. Ottawa residents deserve to be treated fairly. The time to effect this transfer is prior to the sale of Hydro One.

My constituents are tired of being given the runaround by Hydro One, and the lack of details surrounding the sale gives them no comfort that the situation will improve. In fact, the exact opposite is true. My constituents are fearful that the sale will add to their prohibitive and growing electricity bills. We are told by the minister to expect 42% increases in hydro bills over the next few years.

Today we are merely asking for the background information used to justify the sale. It seems to me that if the government is confident in its decision, it should be happy to share this information with the public and let them come to an informed decision. Currently, polls suggest that a majority of people oppose the sale, even when informed that the proceeds are earmarked for transit and infrastructure. Perhaps they realize that we will lose Hydro One but we get to keep the massive debt that was Hydro One. That will be the legacy of the Liberal government.

The provincial government is asking the opposition parties, and therefore Ontarians, to trust them yet again with respect to a major decision on the energy file. This is laughable given the complete mismanagement to date of Ontario's electricity system by this government.

Let's name the glaringly bad choices that this government has made: cancellation and relocation of two gas plants at a cost of \$1.2 million to the taxpayers of Ontario; the imposition of smart meters at a cost of \$2 billion; Hydro One's disastrously wrongful billing system; the wildly unproductive and expensive Green Energy Act, which could cost as much as a hundred billion dollars over the next 20 years, which could be a pile of health care; and to top it all off, the imposition of a carbon tax.

What are the results? Ridiculously high and rising electricity costs for ratepayers, increased taxes now and into the future to pay off the ever-growing debt, the destruction of large swaths of rural Ontario, the loss of 300,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs and the disenfranchisement of local communities.

When it comes to their management of the electricity file system, the provincial government has lost the trust

of the people, particularly rural Ontario. For example, the Premier promised not to impose industrial wind turbines on unwilling hosts and, right after the last election, denied she was planning to impose a carbon tax. Don't be fooled: A cap-and-trade carbon pricing system is a tax. Saying that it's not a tax is a distinction without a difference.

Industrial wind turbines continue to be imposed on unwilling communities. To add insult to injury, when the Auditor General uncovered Hydro One's smart meter debacle, instead of addressing the substantive issues which she had meticulously and thoroughly documented, the Minister of Energy chose to insult her, implying she was incompetent.

On top of everything else, the Liberal government's alarming compensation packages to Hydro One executives totalling \$24 million is a slap in the face to average Ontario families who cannot afford to pay their hydro bills while making ends meet.

People and businesses are rightly concerned that the fire sale of Hydro One will only add to the currently skyrocketing electricity prices and have little faith in empty promises without substantial background. I'm pretty sure we know the answer. We have seen business, as usual, being terrorized and their bank accounts drained. It seems more than coincidental that after the smart meter and billing system debacle, the ink barely dries on the Ombudsman's report and the provincial government's response is to remove independent oversight of the agency.

It is currently important for all Ontarians to know who is to benefit from the sale of Hydro One, because they have a sneaking suspicion it is not them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Well, it has certainly been an interesting debate this afternoon. We of course will be speaking in favour of the official opposition's motion.

We don't think that it is asking too much for some accountability and transparency in the sell-off of Hydro One. But it is amazing to me that I heard the Minister of Transportation say that he felt that this ask was equivalent to something called—he said that asking for this motion was bizarre. Transparency is “bizarre.” This is how warped it has got in this place today. And then he went on to say that transparency is redundant. He called this motion redundant.

1740

The member from Mississauga–Streetsville, of course, was referring to the prospectus at length because that's all they have. All they have is this prospectus, which does not actually indicate the business rationale for the sell-off of Hydro One. It is reasonable—in fact, it is our fiduciary duty as members of the official opposition—to ask for that rationale. In all research, in all evidence in other jurisdictions across this province, the privatization of a power resource, a public asset like Hydro One, has proven to not be in the best interests of the people of this province.

You can't blame us for actually not trusting you. You can't. You've given us a lot of reason to question some of the decisions that have been made on that side of the House.

There's the usual: from last term, eHealth, Ornge, the gas plants, making companies whole when you didn't have to make them whole, a billion dollars here and a billion dollars here and another \$1.1 billion there, and another OPP investigation just for good measure. Then we have MaRS; we have Ontera, which really is the most recent challenge for this government. This is a deal that was negotiated by Infrastructure Ontario. They paid \$6.5 million in consultants to sell a \$61-million company for \$6 million. The outrage that you hear from people across the entire province and in our own ridings—I mean, they can't believe the audacity.

Then, of course, we have the not-so-smart meters that the Auditor General reported on last fall. We have the children's aid database, which I think is one of those IT glitches that this government has faced with outsourcing and contracting out of IT services, which is actually one of the most heinous. This database to protect children was supposed to be developed by 2015. It will not be done until 2019.

So, again, to the trust issue, as to why the motion is before us and why we are supporting the motion—and then of course you move on to SAMS. It just continues. Even today in the House, another outsourced, contracted-out computer glitch with the used-car sales tax; the government did not collect \$2.4 million. But that's a small error compared to the bigger errors.

Just this week, unbelievably, this government is using tax dollars to challenge and to appeal the MPAC assessments on 19 buildings, including this building. They don't want to pay those taxes to the city of Toronto. Of course, the mayor of Toronto has said that two can play at that game. The government designed the MPAC assessment system and now they're fighting the MPAC tax system. The reporter who broke that story said, “You really can't make this stuff up.” You can't.

You have a long line of issues where people do not have confidence in the business acumen of this government because they have not demonstrated their due diligence around where to save money and where to spend money. I would know this, Mr. Speaker, because I'm the finance critic and the critic for Treasury Board. I get to look at where they're trying to save money and where they're trying to spend money, and they're really, really good at spending money and they're trying to save money in all the wrong places.

I think this long line of what can only be described as scandals warrants our attention; it warrants our concern. That is why; for the official opposition to come to this House and to file their motion asking for documents that pertain to the business decision around the sell-off of Hydro One is completely rational. It really is. They want to see the numbers; we want to see the numbers. Do you know who else wants to see the numbers? The people of this province; they do. They want to see those numbers.

We have tried to get this information. We had to file a freedom-of-information request. For the public that's watching, it should not be so hard for an elected member to get information pertaining to the revenue that's coming into this place and how those revenues are being distributed. As I've already indicated, there's cause for concern.

We did file a freedom-of-information request back in June, and we asked for a listing of the consultant contracts for the Premier's Advisory Council on Government Assets, and that included the names of the consulting firms. We asked for the value of those contracts and we asked for a description of the services provided for contracts engaged in this period, because the consultants are doing very well—they really are—in this province. We wanted to know what the consultants said to this advisory council and to cabinet which caused this government and some reasonable and rational people on that side of the House who fully understand that selling off a public asset like Hydro One is not in the best interests of the people of this province—I know there must be somebody. Dalton McGuinty—former Premier McGuinty himself—said that Hydro should remain public to protect Ontarians. Premier McGuinty said that. He said, “Deregulation and privatization hasn't worked” and that it's not in the best interests in the province. I never thought I would say this, Mr. Speaker, but I miss that man. I really do. That has to be the smartest thing that Dalton McGuinty ever said, and it's a matter of record right now.

When we filed this FOI, we went on to ask for reports. We asked for slide decks. We asked for correspondence from third-party consultants because we wanted to know who was informing this decision. We also asked for correspondence among the advisory panel members regarding possible recommendations for modernizing government business enterprises, because somebody at that cabinet table must have said, “Wait a second. Just wait a second. Is this really a smart decision? Why does it make sense to sell a public asset which generates \$500 million in revenue a year? Why does that make sense?” That would be a reasonable and rational question. So we tried to get that through the FOI. Then finally, we asked for the evidence. We asked for the research. We said, “studies regarding energy ratepayer impacts of different plans for Hydro One prepared for the council during this period.”

As you know, Mr. Speaker, the Premier's Advisory Council on Government Assets has been looking at these recommendations with Mr. Clark's panel—Mr. Clark, who, it should be noted, prior to Christmas, last November, was not in favour of selling off a majority of Hydro One. But then something happened. Something happened, and we want to find out what happened. We wanted to get to that correspondence before you guys got to the shredder. We wanted to get to it through the FOI process. We have to do this.

But what came back is really surprising. It said with respect to these items, “partial access to a listing of

consulting contracts has been granted.” So we found out the two consultants, and we found out how much money they made. But we didn't find out what they said. So we have part of the equation, but not the substance. I think that's actually what this motion is trying to get to. Where is the substance? Where are the facts? Where is the evidence?

You have to remember that this advisory council was really working very hard on the beer issue, because this is a priority in the province of Ontario—beer and the sell-off of Hydro One. These are the two things: “Look over here, we're selling beer in grocery stores; don't look over here, we're privatizing hydro.”

But the government came back and said that this is commercially sensitive. They're going to hide behind “commercially sensitive,” just like—this issue actually may end up in the courts. There will be a day when the Premier stands up in this House and says, “It's before the courts.” In fact, the Premier actually has to say that quite a lot.

Then, it goes on to say “access to reports submitted to the council by third party consultants and correspondence ... regarding possible recommendations for modernizing government business enterprises is denied,” because it would “inform and reveal the advice.”

That's what we're trying to get to. We want the advice and we want the information.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Pursuant to standing order 43(d), I'm now required to put the question.

Mr. Brown has moved opposition day number 2. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will say “nay.”

I believe the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1750 to 1800.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Members, take your seats.

Mr. Brown has moved opposition day number 2. All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gélinas, France	Munro, Julia
Arnott, Ted	Gretzky, Lisa	Natyshak, Taras
Bailey, Robert	Hardeman, Ernie	Nicholls, Rick
Barrett, Toby	Harris, Michael	Pettapiece, Randy
Bisson, Gilles	Hatfield, Percy	Sattler, Peggy
Brown, Patrick	Hillier, Randy	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	Jones, Sylvia	Smith, Todd
DiNovo, Cheri	MacLaren, Jack	Taylor, Monique
Fedeli, Victor	Mantha, Michael	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fife, Catherine	Marlow, Gila	Walker, Bill
Forster, Cindy	McDonnell, Jim	Wilson, Jim
French, Jennifer K.	McNaughton, Monte	Yakabuski, John
Gates, Wayne	Miller, Norm	Yurek, Jeff

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): All those opposed, please stand one at a time.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Anderson, Granville
Baker, Yvan
Balkissoon, Bas
Ballard, Chris
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe

Fraser, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoggarth, Ann
Hoskins, Eric
Hunter, Mitzie
Jaczek, Helena
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Marie-France
MacCharles, Tracy
Malhi, Harinder
Mangat, Amrit
Martins, Cristina
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McGarry, Kathryn

Milczyn, Peter Z.
Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Naqvi, Yasir
Oraziotti, David
Potts, Arthur
Qaadri, Shafiq
Rinaldi, Lou
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Sousa, Charles
Thibault, Glenn
Vernile, Daiene
Wong, Soo

Dong, Han
Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel

McMahon, Eleanor
McMeekin, Ted
Meilleur, Madeleine

Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):
The ayes are 39; the nays are 52.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1803.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, William Short

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Samia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Brown, Patrick (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade / Ministre des Affaires civiles, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kiwal, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP)	Parry Sound–Muskoka Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC) Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	York–Simcoe Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB) Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Halton Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP) Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Essex Chatham–Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC) Potts, Arthur (LIB) Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB) Rinaldi, Lou (LIB) Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Perth–Wellington Beaches–East York Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord Northumberland–Quinte West Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP) Scott, Laurie (PC)	London West / London-Ouest Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP) Smith, Todd (PC) Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton Prince Edward–Hastings Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP) Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB) Taylor, Monique (NDP) Thibeault, Glenn (LIB) Thompson, Lisa M. (PC) Vanthof, John (NDP) Vernile, Daiene (LIB) Walker, Bill (PC) Wilson, Jim (PC)	Toronto–Danforth Mississauga–Erindale Hamilton Mountain Sudbury Huron–Bruce Timiskaming–Cochrane Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB) Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC) Yurek, Jeff (PC) Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB) Vacant	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke Elgin–Middlesex–London Willowdale Whitby–Oshawa	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉES PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cheri DiNovo
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bas Balkissoon, Chris Ballard
Grant Crack, Cheri DiNovo
Han Dong, Michael Harris
Sophie Kiwala, Todd Smith
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier / Greffière: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Présidente: Soo Wong
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Toby Barrett, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Ann Hoggarth
Peter Z. Milczyn, Daiene Vernile
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Jim McDonnell, Eleanor McMahon
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylvia Przedziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: John Fraser
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Cristina Martins
Robert Bailey, Vic Dhillon
John Fraser, Wayne Gates
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Cristina Martins, Randy Pettapiece
Lou Rinaldi
Clerk / Greffier: Vacant

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Randy Hillier, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
Laurie Scott
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jack MacLaren
Granville Anderson, Bas Balkissoon
Chris Ballard, Steve Clark
Jack MacLaren, Michael Mantha
Eleanor McMahon, Monte McNaughton
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Présidente: Indira Naidoo-Harris
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Jennifer K. French
Monte Kwinter, Amrit Mangat
Kathryn McGarry, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Daiene Vernile, Bill Walker
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier / Greffière: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Vic Dhillon
Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
Kathryn McGarry, Norm Miller
Jagmeet Singh, Peter Tabuns
Glenn Thibeault
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment /
Comité spécial de la violence et du harcèlement à caractère
sexuel**

Chair / Présidente: Daiene Vernile
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Han Dong, Sylvia Jones
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
Laurie Scott, Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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